World Conqueror & World Renouncer

S. J. Tambiah

A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background

Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology

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A STUDY OF BUDDHISM AND POLITY IN THAILAND AGAINST A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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The analysis and the writing of this book have taken some four years. I must thank the Department of Anthropology, University of Cambridge, and the Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, for secretarial assistance. F. K. Lehman's detailed, erudite, and supportive commentary on an earlier draft of this book saved me from certain errors and enabled me to enrich the analysis. Arnold Green's enthusiastic and constructive comments gave me the final spurt of energy needed to complete the work. Neither of these two persons is responsible for the book's blemishes. I have benefited from my association with Frank Reynolds. Claire Friedland

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I thank my wife, Mary Wynne, for the various ways in which she has helped and supported me, from research and editorial assistance to moral support and encouragement. I feel I cannot leave out our son Jonathan, whose happy arrival coincided with the last stages of this book.

Finally, a word on recent events in Thailand. The second part of the book, including Chapter 19, was virtually completed in 1972, before the occurrence of the student insurrection in October 1973, the deposition of the three leading military figures at the apex of the regime, partly achieved through the mediation of the king, who has a lively sense of the dangers of open involvement, and the setting up of a civilian cum military caretaker government charged with the responsibility of framing a new constitution before holding free elections. Except for inserting a few sentences relating to these momentous events, I have retained the analysis in much its original form because I believe it was and is substantially correct and because the analysis of the events of 1973 and later would comprise a new and separate undertaking.

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PART ONE

1. Introduction: Reconstructing a Journey

Let me begin on an autobiographical note. When I first went to Thailand in the early sixties on a UNESCO assignment lasting some three years, although I lived half the time in Bangkok, my fieldwork and intellectual interests were focused on certain villages located in the northeastern, northern, and central parts of Thailand. I was conscious then, and even more so later on subsequent visits and especially when I was writing the book *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand,* that my view of the Thai world was a projection outward from the village. Such a perspective, though partial, was rewarding, for my intensive close-to-the-ground labors gave me some idea of how religious conceptions and rites were interwoven with village institutional life and some inkling of how the great tradition of Buddhism, in both its doctrinal and cosmological aspects, may be refracted in the microcosm of village life.

I promised myself that some day I would attempt a macroscopic view of religion's connection with society as a whole, especially in society's aspect as a polity. I already knew that the most able and vigorous young monks and novices frequently left the village *wat* (monastery) to go to the primate city of Bangkok, where they lived and pursued their studies in the greatest monasteries of the land, and had dealings with aristocrats, high officials, and generals. I realized that if I wanted to study how kingship and Buddhism interrelated, how religion and politics informed and interpenetrated each other, I would have to manage a panoramic and telescopic view of the society, from a vantage point located high above the bustling metropolis of Bangkok. So in 1971 I began wide-ranging fieldwork in Bangkok, studying closely four urban monasteries and visiting others (including some in provincial towns); inquiring into the organization of the monks' universities, particularly Mahachulalongkorn, and the careers and views of their administrator-monks and monk-students; interviewing officials at the Department of Religious Affairs and collecting whatever official documents I could; and doing many other things such as visiting shrines and meditation centers, attending ceremonies and curing sessions, and so on.

My plan was to write a first volume on the larger question of the present-day interrelation between Buddhism, *sangha* (the order of monks), king-

ship, and polity against a historical backdrop, before embarking on a second volume on urban monasteries and urban religion, particularly the internal organization and economic bases of selected wat, the transactions monks have with various categories of the urban population, the array of roles played by monks as educators, astrologers, meditation teachers, or ritual experts, and the character of certain flourishing urban cults.

My first volume – this one – as it took shape continually pushed me into areas I had originally not intended to enter in any detail, especially with regard to the portrayal of the "historical backdrop." Since the book is unconventional and lengthy and has two parts, I had better explain what the thread is that makes it a coherent whole and why the problem I had undertaken had to be examined and resolved in this manner.

I began my analysis and writing with current data I had collected in the field – in fact all the substantive areas that now constitute Part Two of this book (Chapters 13–19): the scrutiny of the provisions of the Sangha Acts of 1941 and 1963; the study of present-day monastic educational institutions; the plotting of the careers of monks, the routes they took and the patronage system they relied on; the appreciation of the doctrinal interpretations and activism currently in vogue among the educated monks; the probing of the links between the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies, between prominent monks and ruling politicians; the discerning of the present role of kingship vis-à-vis Buddhism on the one side and ruling elites on the other.

Soon I discovered that I could not systematically and meaningfully treat these issues unless I referred developments and structures to those of the nineteenth century. Thus, for example, the existing ecclesiastical hierarchy, the recent Sangha Acts, and the educational aspirations of the present-day monks had to be referred back to developments in King Chulalongkorn's reign, especially culminating with the Sangha Act of 1902; similarly, today's issues, idiom, and language of reformism and scripturalism take their major precedents from the era of Mongkut, first when he was monk and later king (1851–1868), not to mention the sectarian split and the policy toward educated monks who disrobed to take up valued lay positions. Moreover, these developments were inflected by the nineteenth-century political history of Thailand – when it collided with the West and launched upon modernization.

But nineteenth-century Thailand itself was predicated on conceptions of kingship and polity, of merit and rank, of monkhood, its quest and its relation to society – in sum on a holistic conception of a Buddhist polity that not only had its precedents and resonances in the antecedent Ayutthayan and Sukhodayan eras extending back to the time of Thai political emergence, but also in part in the Sinhalese Buddhism of the later Polonnaruva period (eleventh to thirteenth centuries) from which the Sukhodaya civilization claimed to draw its main inspiration and example.

Once arrived at this point in the journey, it became inevitable that the

ultimate push had to be made to early Buddhism in India, to document in what way its tenets, world image, and ideas of salvation and societal order diverged from the brahmanical. Another push was in the direction of the manner in which the early Buddhist conception of kingship and polity was realized (or rather was seen by later times as being realized) in the epochal reign of Emperor Asoka, whose edifice, though shattered soon after his death, was to constitute the great precedent and model for some of the emergent polities of South and Southeast Asia.

Now this is not merely an account of a regressive passage linking events in a chronological order, for it revealed certain lessons in method and interpretation. The major fact I had to come to terms with was that the best possible account of twentieth-century relations between Thai Buddhism and Thai polity and society must at one end moor itself to a central conception between Buddhism and polity predicated in early Buddhism. A second realization was that I had uncovered, in following the trajectory from contemporary Thailand to early Buddhism, a recurrence of structures and their transformations in systematic terms.

In revealing a mode of interpretation my intellectual journey also suggested the method of presentation adopted here. Although the primary focus would be the nexus among religion, sangha, and polity in contemporary Thailand (Part Two), I had to work toward its present contours from an initial position in early Buddhism (Part One). Sartre in his preface to *Search for a Method* (1968) makes this statement: "Do we have the means to constitute a structural, historical anthropology? . . . if such a thing as a Truth can exist in anthropology, it must be truth that has become, and it must make itself a totalization." In interpreting this remark I have taken as my task the understanding of the "becoming" of Buddhism and its sangha in their association with the polity as a total social fact. Totalization for me then means how the systematically accountable, in terms of continuities and transformations in an open-ended way, produces a historical totality that is best understood not in disaggregation but in combination. It implies thus the passage of a totality and its "becoming" in its present shape over time.

The following postulates have informed the sequence of chapters and the organization of the contents in Part One:

1. Early Buddhism forged a macroconception that yoked religion (*sasana*) and its specialized salvation seekers, the monks in their collective identity as sangha, with a sociopolitical order of which kingship was the articulating principle. This macroconception not only contrasted with the brahmanical; internally, its paired terms were related both by complementarity and symbiosis and by dialectical tensions, ambiguities, and paradoxes. Asoka's empire as the alleged realization of the paradigmatic Buddhist polity suggests some of these complexities.

2. The Thai notions and social formations concerning kingship and polity successively took shape in the Sukhodaya, Ayutthaya, and, finally,

Bangkok periods – from the twelfth century to the present day. There were two axes to their development: On the one hand they were by their own account influenced by Sinhalese traditions (but in practice also by Pagan, Mon, and Khmer traditions), which included not merely Pali Buddhism but also the important notion of guardianship and purification of the sangha by the king, at the crucial period of their first efflorescence in Sukhodaya. As its successor, Ayutthaya was not only heir to these, but it also self-consciously incorporated certain conventions of court life from Angkor which it politically destroyed while at the same time borrowing from it. On the other hand, the political vicissitudes and instabilities of the Thai kingdoms, their rise and fall, were integrally related to the homologous levels of cosmological, territorial, and politico-economic designs that constituted them into a total formation that we have called the galactic polity, characterized by a pulsation between weaker and stronger states or modalities. The galactic structure of the traditional Thai polity, as, for example, during Ayutthayan times, gives us an understanding of the varying intensity of the political penetration and regulation of the sangha and the hierarchical variations in the ecclesiastical structure that accompanied this penetration and regulation.

3. The final piece of territory covered in Part One is the historical cumulative transition of the traditional galactic polity to the radial polity, particularly during the reigns of Mongkut and Chulalongkorn in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among other factors, the impact and challenge of Western powers and the expanding agricultural and commercial horizons enabled the polity to reach a position of strength and a stability previously unknown under royal leadership, from which various policies of national integration, centralization, and modernization were launched. The sangha did not escape being affected by this political trend, which produced a unique amalgam of kingship, polity, and religion in the only country in Southeast Asia that saved itself from colonial rule and which affords us a rare opportunity for in-depth study.

The presuppositions, structures, and empirical manifestations of the relation between Theravada Buddhism and polity will emerge as we proceed. But before the reader embarks, it might be illuminating to situate that relationship, however briefly and roughly, in regard to that between the Christian church and polity at some specific time and place.

If one were to restrict oneself to the place of the ecclesiastical church within the feudal society of Europe in early medieval times, one cannot fail to see the marked differences, which in a negative sense help us to see what the Buddhist polity was not, though perhaps they little help us to see what it positively was.

Marc Bloch (1962) tells us that within the European feudal world the church was constituted as a "legal" body with its own law and jealously guarded rights of jurisdiction but that it was in no sense a "social class," for it contained a multitude of tonsured persons ranging from parish priests

and ordinary monks of lowly origins to the prelates and archbishops of the church, all living varied modes of life.

Significantly, Bloch used the telling phrase "feudalization of the church" to describe the church's assumption of a feudal political coloring. This meant that the church's patrimony, as represented by mode of rent collection, exercise of authority and organization of military vassals, was essentially of a seigneurial nature, so much so that the concepts and practices of vassalage impregnated the relations of subordination within the church. Because the church itself was a feudal power equal and separate from the nobility, there were inevitably various forms of collisions between the church and secular powers over important ecclesiastical appointments. These collisions were enacted in an idiom that was typically feudal, as witnessed by the fact that a priest could take the oath of fealty but not undergo the ceremony of homage to secular authorities, for the latter meant subjection.

It was this parallelism as well as opposition of church and political authorities, of pope and Holy Roman Emperor, and their mutual symbolic exchanges that is vividly captured in these words:

> Infinite cross-relations between church and state, active in every century of the Middle Ages, produced hybrids in either camp. Mutual borrowings and exchanges of insignia, political symbols, prerogatives, and rights of honor had been carried on perpetually between the spiritual and secular leaders of Christian society. The pope adorned his tiara with a golden crown, donned the imperial purple, and was preceded by the imperial banners when riding in solemn procession through the streets of Rome. The emperor wore under his crown a mitre, donned the pontifical shoes and other clerical raiments, and received, like a bishop, the ring at his coronation. These borrowings affected, in the earlier Middle Ages, chiefly the ruling individuals, both spiritual and secular, until finally the *sacerdotium* had an imperial appearance and the *regnum* a clerical touch (Kantorowicz 1957, p. 193).

Whatever the resonances and embryonic developments in these same directions, the sangha in Thailand (or for that matter anywhere else in Theravada Southeast Asia) did not reach that degree of "feudalization" or patrimonialization that made it a parallel estate to the king's, nor did the *sacerdotium* and *regnum* participate in each other's symbols so thoroughly, despite the growth of a hierarchical apparatus in the sangha.

Nor indeed did the Buddhist canon or the sangha ever systematically embark like the medieval Christian church on a theory of organically graded hierarchical society that "attempted to spiritualize the material by incorporating it in a divine universe, which should absorb and transform it" (Tawney 1940, p. 36). In the words of a famous papal bull: "The way of religion is to lead the things which are higher through the things which are intermediate. According to the law of the universe all things were not reduced to order equally and immediately; but the lowest through the intermediate, the intermediate through the higher." But this Christian

cosmology was employed in the context of the church's accepting the world and trying to transform it according to a divine purpose.

The thrust of the (Theravada) Buddhist view of sangha vis-à-vis kingship, of the realization of "religion" in polity and of polity's contribution to the maintenance of religion, was quite different and contained its own peculiar ambiguities and generated its own characteristic tensions. But interestingly, despite their marked differences, one component of the medieval Christian church, namely, its monastic orders, and the monasteries of the Buddhist sangha may unexpectedly converge in one important aspect. The Christian monastic orders may well have participated in the economic "colonization" of Europe; their Buddhist counterparts on the other hand may have followed the flag and contributed to the political "colonization" of Southeast Asia and to the stabilization of kingship. Of this we know little. But just as surely as the majority of the monastic orders and lower rungs of the medieval Christian church (and even its contemporary manifestations in Italy, Spain, and Latin America) were filled by men of lowly origins, primarily rural, who found in the church the avenues of education, achievement, and mobility, both social and geographical, so in the Buddhist kingdoms and their postcolonial successors, the monastic foundations recruited and continue to recruit largely from the rural poor and afford them the possibility of education and a special kind of unimpeded achievement. This phenomenon as it occurs in Thailand today, and occurred in the recent past, we shall document in detail in the second half of the book; its possible weightier occurrence in the past, when royal monastic foundations were the primary seats of literacy and learning, produced the literati and acted as magnets for the monks for whom learning and religious proficiency were defined as being the same thing, may go a long way toward understanding the social dynamics of the proposition that king and sangha supported each other.

2. From *Rajadharma* (the King's "Whole Duty") to *Dharmaraja* (the "Righteous Ruler")

The Buddhist Book of Genesis

The *Agganna Suttanta*, which the Rhys Davids (1921) christened *A Book of Genesis*, gives the Buddhist version of the origins of the world, society, and kingship. This myth is important for two reasons: It is a cosmological representation that time and again has been alluded to, developed, and embroidered both in the later Pali literature of Southern Buddhism and in the Sanskritic works of Northern Buddhism;[1] it is also unmistakably a statement contrary to the brahmanical version of the origins of the world and societal order.

My previous book *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand* gave a central place to Buddhist cosmology. I described there briefly the cosmology that postulates that world systems are destroyed and reformed in cycles of vast stretches of time (*kalpa*), that the world system consists of 31 planes of existence divided into the three major worlds – *kama loka*, *rupa loka*, and *arupa loka* – which again are subdivided into regions extending from terrifying hells at the bottom through the worlds of animals and men to the guardians of the world atop Mount Meru, and from there to the still higher numerous brahma heavens. I do not wish here to repeat that description except to remind the reader of two major points made in it: firstly, that the stratification presenting a gradient from black torment suffered by those in hell to pure bliss and tranquillity enjoyed by the gods is a continuous scheme of ascent from gross materiality to ethereal spirituality in which all forms of existence – god, man, animal, asura demon, and wandering ghosts – participate; and, secondly, that all those forms of existence belong to *laukika*, this world of sensation, and are to be distinguished from *lokottara*, the true "otherworld" of *nibbana* at the

[1] For example, the *Mahavastu*, a Sanskritic work that belongs to the canon of the Lokottaravadins, a branch of the Mahasanghikas, reproduces the account. A Tibetan version is found in the Dulva section of the Bhak-gyur (of the Mulasarvastivadin school). The Lokaprajnapti (a part of the Sarvastivada canon) contains a version of the cosmic story. I take these references from Ghoshal (1959), ch. 14. We may also note that Paul Mus' essay "Thousand-Armed Kannon, a Mystery or a Problem" (1964) concentrates on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa*, a work partly based on the canonical version of the origin of kingship and social order.

very top of the pilgrim's progress, which stands for the bursting out of the web of consequences that derives from this-worldly entanglement.

I excluded from this cosmological picture that portion of the Buddhist cosmology relating to the origins of sociopolitical order in the world of men via the institution of kingship, because this matter was not directly relevant to the empirical contents of my earlier book. But it is central to the concerns of this book, and therefore we shall begin with it.

The *Agganna Suttanta* is composed of two parts, the first a dialogue between the Buddha and two probationary disciples in which the Buddha disputes the social and moral claims of the brahmans, and the second, the recitation of the cosmological myth of the genesis of the world.

The putting down of the claims of the brahman *vanna* (Pali for stratum; Skt. *varna*) is occasioned by the reporting to their teacher by two disciples on probation desiring to become *bhikkhus* (monk, literally mendicant), namely, Vasettha and Bharadvaja, both "brahman by birth and family," that the orthodox members of their *vanna* "do blame and revile us with characteristic abuse," because they had renounced the best rank "and have gone over to that low class – to shaven recluses, to the vulgar rich, to them of swarthy skins, to the footborn descendants." The brahman accusers claimed that they were of the best social grade, of clear complexion and pure breed, and "genuine children of Brahma, born of his mouth."

The reference here is of course to the familiar Vedic myth of the creation of the four varnas by means of the sacrifice of the primeval man as contained in the *Purusha-Sukta* of the Rigveda and reiterated in subsequent *smrti* and other literature. We shall return to this myth later, but let us take note here of the Buddha's arguments against the brahmanical claim. He first pokes fun by asking how brahmans can claim that they are born from Brahma's mouth when on the contrary the wives of brahmans "are known to be fertile, are seen to be with child, bringing forth and nursing children." Then he makes a pronouncement that appears in many other *suttas* and is worth detailed scrutiny. He first asserts that there are four vannas – *khattiya* (nobles), *brahmana* (brahmans), *vessa* (tradesfolk) and *sudda* (workpeople).[2] We note immediately that contrary to the brahmanical order of listing, here the nobles precede the brahmans. The Buddha then says that "both bad and good qualities, blamed and praised respectively by the wise, are . . . distributed among each of the four classes," that is, vanna status does not determine the ethical achievements of individuals. Finally, the Buddha drives the point home that

> whoever among all these four classes becomes a bhikkhu, an Arahant, one who has destroyed the deadly taints . . . has attained his own salvation, has destroyed the fetter of rebirth, and has become free because he has perfected knowledge – he is declared chief among them, and that in virtue of a norm (*dhamma*).

[2] The Sanskrit terms are *kshatriya, brahmana, vaisya,* and *shudra.*

The same message is reiterated in the myth of genesis that follows this dialogue – but the myth contains many other features of cosmological and doctrinal importance that deserve close scrutiny. The Buddhist genesis myth develops in two grand movements. The first movement states the story from the dissolution and re-formation of the world to the point of differentiation in nature and among men, and then among the latter the occurrence of increasing immorality and greed. The second movement describes men getting together, as a result, and instituting kingship to regulate their affairs; and under the aegis of this institution, there develops graded society; and, finally, seeking deliverance from such society arises the salvation-seeking *bhikkhu*.

The First Movement

The sequential structure of the first movement is depicted in Figure 2.1. It develops as a dialectical interaction and evolution of nature and the physical world on the one side and of human beings on the other. Three ideas appear to be embedded in this movement:

1. On the cosmological dimension we see a gradient along which an original spirituality, or mind alone, progressively combines with and generates an increasingly gross materiality. We immediately sense that this is the symmetrical reverse of the scheme whereby from the gross animal and human state beings ascend upward on the *kammic* ladder to the heavens, progressively shedding form and sense until they burst out into the still state of nibbana.

2. The evolution that is pictured is in one sense a retrogression and degeneration of man. The psychological propensity attributed to man is that his drives of greed, immorality, lust, and so on, increase in potency as he develops in unregulated fashion. We are reminded here of certain psychological theories that propose that man's natural drives are socially destructive unless they are regulated through cultural and social impositions.

3. Finally, we recognize that the evolutionary schemes represent a progressive differentiation out of "one world of water and darkness," a differentiation that produces the complex and variegated world we know today. There is a physical differentiation into earth, moon, sun, and the planetary and stellar constellations, into night and day, and into time and calendrical sequences; there is the vegetal differentiation out of the earth into outgrowths, creepers, and edible rice; there is physical and sexual intercourse and procreation ("that which was reckoned immoral at that time is now reckoned to be moral"), and, finally, there is the "spontaneous" growth among humans of the propensity to accumulate property through the fact of private ownership of property. Thus the fall of man paradoxically gives rise to those conditions that are the ground of society. Furthermore, we realize almost with a shock of unexpectedness that at

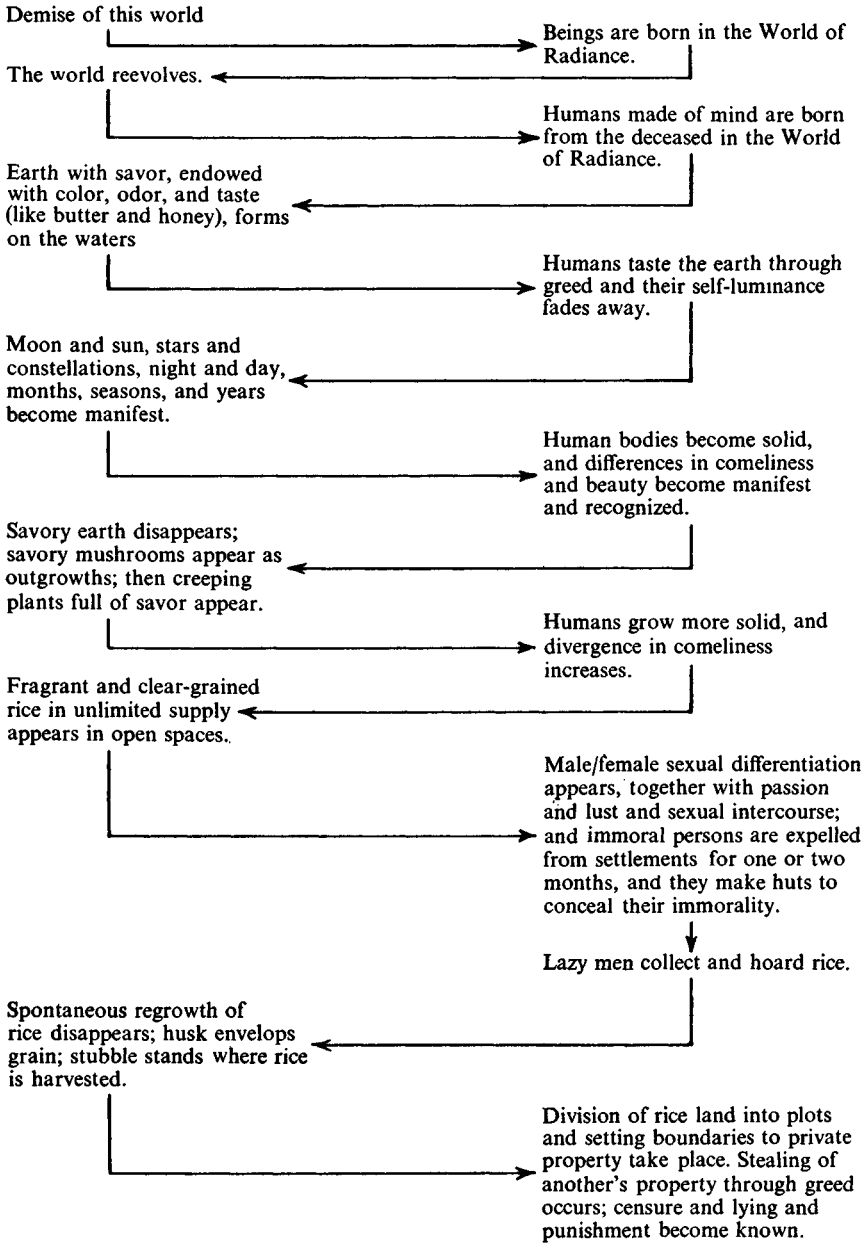

Demise of this world
Beings are born in the World of Radiance.
The world reevolves.
Humans made of mind are born from the deceased in the World of Radiance.
Earth with savor, endowed with color, odor, and taste (like butter and honey), forms on the waters
Humans taste the earth through greed and their self-luminance fades away.
Moon and sun, stars and constellations, night and day, months, seasons, and years become manifest.
Human bodies become solid, and differences in comeliness and beauty become manifest and recognized.
Savory earth disappears; savory mushrooms appear as outgrowths; then creeping plants full of savor appear.
Humans grow more solid, and divergence in comeliness increases.
Fragrant and clear-grained rice in unlimited supply appears in open spaces.
Male/female sexual differentiation appears, together with passion and lust and sexual intercourse; and immoral persons are expelled from settlements for one or two months, and they make huts to conceal their immorality.
Lazy men collect and hoard rice.
Spontaneous regrowth of rice disappears; husk envelops grain; stubble stands where rice is harvested.
Division of rice land into plots and setting boundaries to private property take place. Stealing of another's property through greed occurs; censure and lying and punishment become known.

Figure 2.1. The sequential structure of the genesis myth: the first movement.

least this Buddhist genesis story not only postulates private property as a "natural" fact of human life but also that it is advanced as the *proximal* and *anterior* fact leading to the formation of regulated society. This is not an accidental but an essential fact of Buddhist theorizing – but of this more later.

The Second Movement

The second movement is absolutely critical as a statement of the Buddhist theory of society cum polity and the place of the *bhikkhu*'s salvation quest in relation to it. In fact it contains the germ, the basic element, of the total phenomenon of Buddhism as a world religion, which became historically manifest and bore fruit under Asoka and at a later time in places outside of India.

Let us follow the sequences and comment on them:

1. Disorder among human beings reached its highest point when with the disappearance of the spontaneous growth of rice as a result of their greedy hoarding of it, men divided the rice fields among themselves, settled boundaries, and thereafter proceeded to steal each other's plots and engage in lying and censure and punishment.

It is at this point that human beings, gathering themselves together and arguing the need for the selection of "a certain being, who should be wrathful when indignation is right, who should censure that which should be censured and should banish him who deserves to be banished," selected from among themselves "the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable" and invited him to be king in return for their contribution of "a proportion" of their rice.

This sequence has many facets of interest. First of all, we are given an elective and contractual theory of kingship, whereby a king is chosen by the people and he is remunerated by the payment of a rice tax. This elective and contractual theory is counterbalanced by the fact that the one chosen is the best among men – most handsome in physical form and most perfect in conduct. Thus he is Maha Sammata because he is "the great elect"; he is Raja because "he charms others by the Norm" (dhamma); and he is Khattiya, "Lord of the Fields." Thus the king is "chosen" in two senses of the word; he is both elective and elect. We are here sensitized to the moral and physical attributes of kingship that are developed in other Buddhist texts.

2. Other social consequences follow the election of the king. We are first told that "thus there . . . was the origin of this social circle of the Nobles" (*khattiya*); next, about the origins of brahmans: They are the beings who "put away (*bahenti*) evil, immoral customs." The brahmans divide into two categories, the second of which is an inferior differentiation out of the first.

The brahmans who meditate in "leaf huts in woodland spots," having

given up domestic activities of pestle and mortar, and who seek food in village and town and royal city are called the *jhayaka* (meditators). But those among them who could not endure meditation in the forest settled on the outskirts of villages and towns, making books (*ganthekaronta*) and taking to the vocation of "repeaters of Vedas." Therefore, they were called *ajjhayaka*. (The myth fires the broadside that these latter brahmans who are teachers of the Vedas and conductors of rites – the "orthodox" brahmans lauded in the Vedic myth of creation – "meditate not" and "at that time they were looked upon as the lowest; now they are thought of as the best.") We note that the brahmans of both kinds live by "the gift of food" in contrast to the *khattiya* rulers and nobles, who as lords of the fields receive a tax or tribute of rice.

Now there were other beings who "adopting the married state, set on foot various [*vissa*] trades" and these are the *vessa* (tradesfolk). Lastly, those beings who remained and took to hunting and "suchlike trifling pursuits" became *sudda* (the lowest grade of folk).

What social ideas can we see embedded in this sequence? (a) The remarkable feature is that the four strata of society are described as forming *after* the founding of kingship itself. We might say that society and its gradations develop under the umbrella of kingship, which provides the shade of law and order. (b) We note next that the four strata are described as forming "according to the Norm," that is, legitimately, on a voluntaristic basis. Beings by virtue of the walk of life they engage in become members of a particular stratum. (c) These strata, or vannas, are given an ordering that, as we have noted, places the ruling stratum above the brahmans.

3. The last sequence in the second movement in the Buddhist myth of genesis describes the *bhikkhu*, an *arahant*, as the recluse drawn from all four strata irrespective of rank who "misprizing" or in contempt of the worldly norm goes from home into homeless life. This *bhikkhu*, who breaks through the bonds of society, is *chief among them all*, by virtue of the norm he follows, which consists in laying down the burden, destroying "the fetter of re-becoming" and achieving the knowledge that makes him free.

If we were to take a total view of the myth, we would find that it shows a balanced structure, which I have tried to represent in Figure 2.2. It begins with a state of existence as ethereal mind and describes the evolution of the world as a process of increasing materialization (materiality), differentiation, and disorder. It then postulates the institution of kingship as providing order and regulation in the world, and under whose aegis society as ordered vannas develops. Then it begins the opposite course by which the *bhikkhu* becomes a classless or vanna-less person, breaks through the fetters of society, and follows the higher norm. His upward course is one by which salvation from the fetters of rebirth and materiality is sought along a salvation quest that leads to the ulimate freedom of nibbana.

Figure 2.2 clarifies a basic structure in the myth: According to the Bud-

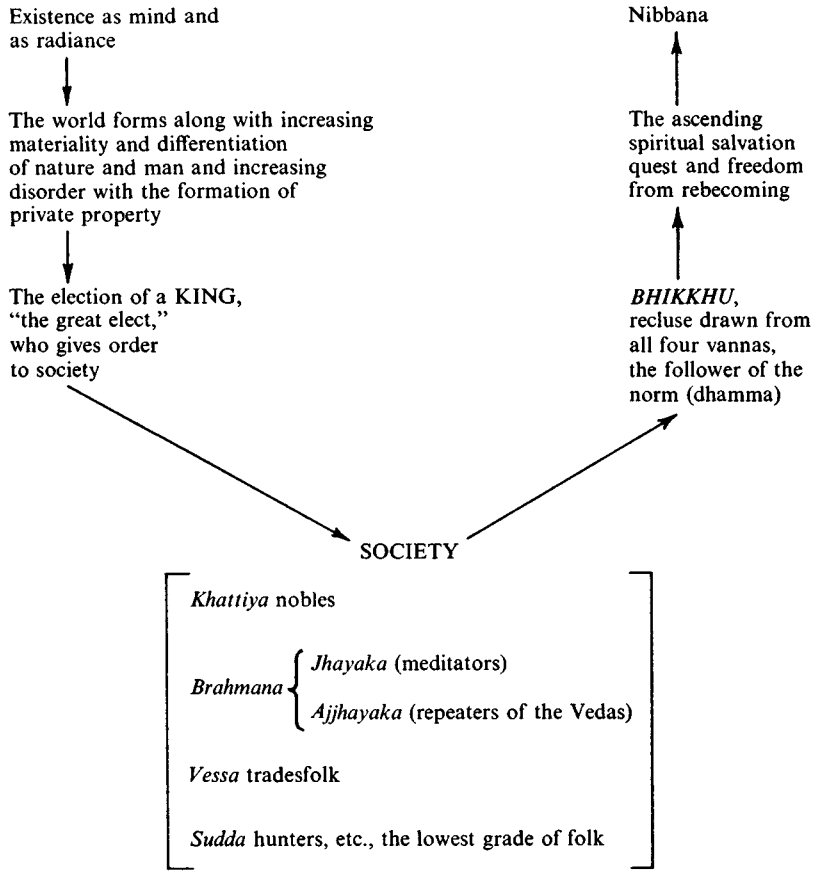

Existence as mind and as radiance
The world forms along with increasing materiality and differentiation of nature and man and increasing disorder with the formation of private property
The election of a KING, "the great elect," who gives order to society
Nibbana
The ascending spiritual salvation quest and freedom from rebecoming
BHIKKHU, recluse drawn from all four vannas, the follower of the norm (dhamma)
SOCIETY
Khattiya nobles
Brahmana *Jhayaka* (meditators)
Ajjhayaka (repeaters of the Vedas)
Vessa tradesfolk
Sudda hunters, etc., the lowest grade of folk

Figure 2.2. The genesis of king, society, and *Bhikkhu*.

dhist scheme of things relating to the world, there are two foremost or superior beings, the *bhikkhu* and the king, but the former is superior, "the chief of them all." The concluding statement of the myth affirms this conclusion that they are the two central personages. The king is the mediator between social disorder and the social order; the *bhikkhu* is the mediator between home and homelessness, between a world of fetters and a free state of deliverance. The king is the fountainhead of society; the bhikkhu is of that society and transcends it.

> The Khattiya is the best among this folk
> Who put their trust in lineage.
> But one in wisdom and in virtue clothed,
> Is best of all 'mong spirits and men.

In a nutshell this is what Buddhism as a "total social fact" in the Maussian sense is largely about – a totality that includes the relation between

bhikkhu and king (who encompasses and includes the householders), between the Buddha and the Cakkavatti (Chakravartin) as the two wheels of the dhamma, between the sangha and the polity and society in which it is located, between this-worldly and other-worldly pursuits. It is this totality that also makes Buddhism a world religion[3] and not merely the pursuit of a few virtuosi.

It is this very totality and simultaneity of multiple strands that are, for example, presented to us in quick episodic succession in the *Maha-Parinibbana Sutta* (Rhys Davids 1881), *The Book of the Great Decease*, put together by early Buddhists as the Buddha's final recapitulation of the most important and characteristic tenets of his teachings, as he makes his last long peripatetic journey from Rajagaha to his place of death in Kusinara via Nalanda, Pataligama, Vesali, and other places, discoursing with his brethren, lay disciples, kings, and tribal chiefs and accepting without distinction the food from all – king's ministers, Ambapali the courtesan, and Kunda the smith at whose hands he takes the fatal meal of dried boar's meat. The wide-ranging summary discourses and the roving physical journey work in perfect harmony.

The Buddha reminds the brethren of what he had previously declared to Mara his historic mission was: "I shall not die, O Evil One!, until not only the brethren and sisters of the order, but also the lay disciples of either sex shall have become true hearers, wise and well trained, ready and learned, versed in the chapters."

On this last journey of recapitulation and summation he discourses continually and foremost with his fellow *bhikkhus* on the "conditions of welfare of the community": He advises them on their organization, which should follow the model of the Vajjians in that they should hold full and frequent public assemblies, meet, rise, and carry out undertakings in concord, observe orthodoxy, enacting nothing not already established and abrogating nothing that has already been enacted, and honor and support their elders. He also continually reiterates the nature of their vocation and quest – their living the life of solitude; their exercising "in mental activity, search after truth, energy, joy, peace, earnest contemplation, and equanimity of mind"; their "perception of non-permanency, of non-individuality" (*anattam*); and their practice of those virtues "which are untarnished by the desire of future life, or by the belief in the efficacy of outward acts" (i.e., rites and ceremonies). "Great is the fruit, great the advantage of earnest contemplation when set round with upright conduct. Great is the fruit, great the advantage of intellect when set round with earnest contemplation."

For his lay disciples of Pataligama the Buddha's admonitions concern

[3] Since Buddhism as a world religion includes both the Mahayana and Theravada forms, let me state that in this book I am concerned primarily with certain features of Theravada Buddhism. When I use the word "Buddhism," I use it as a shorthand for this branch and exclude from coverage – unless I state specifically – Mahayana Buddhism.

not their mental culture but their reputation among their fellows, their state of mind at death, and their future rebirth chances:

> Fivefold, O householders is the loss of the wrong-doer through his want of rectitude. In the first place the wrong-doer, devoid of rectitude, falls into great poverty through sloth; in the next place his evil repute gets noised abroad; thirdly, whatever society he enters – whether of Brahmans, nobles, heads of houses, or Samanas – he enters shyly and confused; fourthly, he is full of anxiety when he dies; and lastly, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn into some unhappy state of suffering or woe.

And of the lay disciple whose lot was the meritorious act of presenting food before the great man's death (an act matched only by a similar offering before the great man's entering upon enlightenment), he says: "There has been laid by Kunda the smith a karma redounding to length of life, redounding to good fame, redounding to the inheritance of heaven, and of sovereign power."

To the brethren, particularly to his beloved Ananda, he reveals one of the fruits of meditation and mental training set round with upright conduct – the acquisition of the mystical power of *iddhi*, by which the body can perform actions superior to the ordinary limitations of matter. The Buddha informs Ananda that he had "developed, practised, accumulated, and ascended the very heights of the four paths of *Iddhi*" and that it was within his capacity to exercise it and prolong his life for the rest of the *kalpa* that had yet to run. And because Ananda, "incapable of comprehending," fails to make the request of his lord, he "consciously rejected the rest of his allotted sum of life."

But if the conquest over the body is the contemplator's profit, the Buddha allotted the death of his body itself and the care of the bones as the layman's concern.[4] He informs Ananda that earthquakes take place at the time of the conception of *bodhisattva* (Buddha-to-be), his birth and enlightenment, when he founds "the sublime kingdom of righteousness," and when he passes entirely away.

The mortal remains of the Tathagatha are entrusted to nobles and householders, who will give due honor to the remains in a manner that brings the concepts of Buddha and Cakkavatti together: "As men treat the remains of a king of kings, so Ananda should they treat the remains of a Tathagatha," which consists in the erection of a *dagaba* over them at four crossroads.

And with the erection of monuments is sanctioned the virtue of pilgrimage. The four places that the believing man should visit "with feelings of reverence and awe," the Buddha tells Ananda, are his birthplace, the place where he attained supreme insight, the place where the kingdom of righteousness was set on foot by him, and the place where he passed away.

[4] This distinction is systematized in the Sarvastivadin Abhidharma as the contrast between the *dharma*-body (*dharma-kaya*) and the material body (*rupa-kaya*) of the Buddha (Conze 1970, p. 172).

"And they, Ananda, who shall die while they, with believing heart are journeying on such a pilgrimage, shall be reborn after death, when the body shall dissolve, in the happy realms of heaven."

And so the great *sutta* ends with the fate of the Buddha's bones and their container. The bones divided into eight parts are, except for a single brahman recipient, claimed by the Mallas of Kusinara, the king of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vesali, the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Koliyas of Ramagama, and the Mallas of Pava on the plea that "the blessed one belonged to the soldier caste, and we too are of the soldier caste." Dona, the brahman who made the division and took the vessel, exhorted: "Wide spread let the Thupas rise in every land. . . ." And so the recipients made mounds over the blessed one – eight for the remains, one for the vessel, and one for the embers.

3. The Brahmanical Theory of Society and Kingship

The Buddhist picture of the genesis of the world, society, and kingship is a studied and ironical reversal of certain aspects of the brahmanical version that stems from Vedic times; but the Buddhist intention is more than simply ironical, for it aspires to generate a rival and wholly different scheme of meaning although sharing with Hinduism certain elementary philosophical and conceptual particles.

A central difference between the two systems, which we shall develop in this and the next chapter, is that Buddhism is basically without ontology (in the sense that its ultimate elements, the dharmas, being momentary flashings, impermanent without duration, cannot be indexical of the "essence" of things or immanent entities like "self"), while Hinduism has this ontology, whose building blocks are notions of self, deity, and *atman*, and so on, as existent entities. Thus in understanding Buddhist cosmology we should appreciate at the outset that its gods represent rather than embody dharma, and although they are assigned ordering paradigmatic positions, they are transient, not eternal, beings subject to world process.

The problem of dating texts, though vexed, is not of critical interest for our purpose of conveying the basic features of the Vedic-brahmanical theory on the one hand and Buddhist theory on the other. When placed against the Buddhist Pali canon and *Jatakas*, the early brahmanical *smrti* or dharmasutra literature can be seen as having preceded them, and the works on *arthashastra* (the science of instrumental activity particularly relating to polity and economy), especially the work of Kautilya, which is a landmark, as succeeding them. The still later brahmanical codifications of sacred law such as the *smrti* of Manu and Yajnavalkya and the great epic *Mahabharata*, which are the achievements of the brahmanical reconquest of Hindu society after the occurrence of Buddhism, although they incorporate some of the flowers of Buddhist thought, are yet reworkings and elaborations of earlier basic Vedic and brahmanical ideas, with the object of stating a comprehensive synthesis. Thus, ignoring chronological details, since there is a thread of continuity in Hindu thought on sacred law, I shall present it as a composite and contrast it with the Buddhist configuration of ideas (which also shows remarkable continuity), but again

with increasing elaboration, from the earlier canonical to the later non-canonical works.

The old Vedic conception of the social order, the dogma of a divine creation, is reiterated by an early *smrti* writer such as Baudhayana, by a later writer such as Manu, and again in the *Mahabharata*. Manu, for example, has the all too familiar Purusha myth by which the four varnas (status orders) are said to have sprung from the primeval man's body (the primeval man being a creation of the divine creative principle) – the Brahman from his mouth, the *kshatriya* from his arms, the *vaisya* from his thighs, and the *shudra* from his feet.

But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet.

To Brahmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).

The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures.

The Vaisya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Sudra, to serve meekly even those (other) three castes.

As the Brahmana sprang from (Brahman's) mouth, as he was the first-born, and as he possesses the Veda, he is by right the lord of this whole creation (Manu 1, 87–91, 93, in Buhler's translation 1886).

These verses are a fragment in what is actually the brahmanical version of the creation myth, which parallels the Buddhist story of genesis discussed earlier. The brahmanical myth is actually longer, with numerous redundancies (mainly variant versions of the divine creative process). The bare summary of it given as follows will enable us to see how much in spirit it differs from the Buddhist version. Manu himself is the relater of the myth:

The universe first existed in "the shape of darkness"; then the divine self-existent Svayambhu appeared as "creative power." He created the waters by his thought and placed his own seed in them; and in that golden egg (*hiranyagarbha*), he was born as Brahman, the progenitor of the whole world. Thus was formed the first male, Purusha, famed under the name of Brahman.

The divine one divided the egg by thought into two halves, the heaven and earth, together with the middle space and the waters, and so on. And from himself he created the mind, organs of sensation, the elementary particles, out of which again, by joining with particles of himself, he created all beings: the gods, the eternal sacrifice, fire, wind, and sun; time and its divisions and seasons; mountains and rivers; speech, merit and de-

merit, pleasure and pain, and so on; and the four varnas from his own mouth, arms, thighs, and feet.

The divine one then divided his own body into male and female and, uniting with the female, he produced Virag. Virag through the practice of austerities produced Manu. Then in turn I, Manu, by performing austerities, produced the ten great sages, who in turn created seven other Manus, the gods and *yakshas*, *apsaras* and *nagas*; the elements of nature from comets and thunderbolts to perfect rainbows; animals, fishes, birds, and plants, and so on.

When he thus produced the universe, the divine one disappeared in himself. And by alternately waking and slumbering, he incessantly revivifies and destroys this whole movable and immovable creation.

But he having composed the institutes of sacred law taught them to me, Manu, and I next taught them to the sages.

Among the institutes of sacred law, Manu appears to concentrate on three central ideas that are part and parcel of the embracing notion of dharma.

1. The creations and distinctions of the world are numberless and repetitive and follow a pattern. In the Krita age dharma is four-footed; and in the other three ages dharma is deprived successively of one foot through the prevalence of unmeritorious conduct. And the duties of men in the four ages also differ in accordance with the degeneration of man (and, we may add, with the corresponding relative application of dharma): "In the Krita age the chief (virtue) is declared to be (the performance of) austerities, in the Treta (divine) knowledge, in the Dvapara (the performance of) sacrifices, in the Kali liberality alone (Manu 1, 86).

2. Then Manu immediately follows up with the creation of the four varnas from the divine one's mouth, arms, thighs, and feet, which we have already described.

3. And, finally, Manu asserts that the purview of dharma, the rule of conduct as transcendent law, is comprehensive and encompassing; it deals with the sacraments, studentship, marriage rites, funeral sacrifices, the modes of gaining subsistence, the rules relating to lawful and forbidden food, the purification of men and things, the laws concerning women, the laws of jurisprudence and inheritance and division of property, the behavior of the varnas and mixed castes, the whole duty of a king, final emancipation and renouncing the world, transmigration, and so on. In fact, the succeeding chapters of the laws of Manu are concerned with the elucidation of the rules concerning all these domains that come under the authority of dharma.

Although the Buddhist *Agganna Suttanta* and the first chapter of Manu dealing with creation are not equivalent texts, nor the only cosmological statements in the vast literature of the two religions, we can still usefully attempt a few comparative comments, pertaining to the issues central to this book.

The brahmanical statement conjoins divinity with the process of creation of the world and its beings, and also with the creation of the sacred law and codes of conduct, as one single, total, unitary phenomenon. The creation of nature and the creation of culture are part of a single process. There is no separation between the laws of nature and the laws of man. Contrary to the divine creative process, the Buddhist myth gives a picture of a creative differentiating process, which essentially moves forward not by divine energy but by the *kammic* energy produced by the degenerative and immoral acts of human beings themselves. (Manu too refers to a degenerative process in the creation story in respect of the cycle of four ages but introduces it as a full-blown mechanism produced by the acts of men only later in the code when he discusses the confusion of castes through wrong mixtures and transactions.) In the Buddhist view, also, the evolution of nature and culture are dialectically related in a single scheme and process.

The real thrust of the Buddhist story is that it is self-consciously an inversion of the Vedic theory of the origin of the varna. In that theory the varnas are divinely created, and of them the preeminent varna is that of the brahman. Furthermore, the divinely ordained dharma code of conduct, whose foremost representative is the brahman himself, is the root and foundation of social order; the *kshatriya* as ruler and king, also divinely ordained, practices the code appropriate to his status and function, the *rajadharma*, which appropriately applies to the domain of *artha* (the domain of instrumental action, which includes what is labeled in the West as the domains of polity and economy) and which by no means provides the moral basis for society as a whole.[1]

But in the Buddhist myth we find that social order – indeed society – occurs together with and as a result of the institution of kingship by the voluntary acts of men. Thus it could be said that whereas in the Hindu theory, dharma, as morality and lawful conduct in general, and society are thought to have more inclusive competence than the more differentiated and more particularistic code of *artha* and its related political economy, in Buddhist theory they are all conjoined, so that the dharma of kingship becomes the encompassing code that reigns over society cum political economy, which are not separable.

While in both the brahmanical and the Buddhist statements the notion of dharma is central, each however cuts the cake in different fashion. It is to this difference that we must now address ourselves further.

[1] "This dharma is the sovereign power ruling over kshatra itself. Therefore, there is nothing higher than dharma. . . . Verily, that which is dharma is truth [*satya*] . . ." (Brhad Aranyaka Upanisad 1.4, 11–14).

Dharma, Artha, *and Kingship in Dharmashastric and Arthashastric Literature*

Let us begin with the definition of three concepts that occur in the dharmashastric literature, namely *dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*.

One of the root problems in giving an adequate translation of these words is that the Western distinctions between ritual and religious status or domains, on the one hand, and political and economic status or domains, on the other, are not those made in the dharmashastric and other brahmanical literature. Next, as we have remarked in the analyses of the myths, no firm distinction is made between an order of nature and laws of nature and the order of morality and code for conduct: Thus in the sphere of kinship and caste relations the sharing of biogenetic and other material substance is considered to entail the sharing of customs and norms of conduct.[2] Finally, as Durkheim commented on Tylor's universal definition of religion, in the literature in question there is also no distinction made between natural and supernatural orders and between secular and sacred spheres as is commonly done in Western thought.

We could gloss dharma as "morality," the code of conduct that upholds the moral and natural order of the world as divinely instituted in the Vedic and dharmashastric codes; *artha* as the control of material and human resources, the administration of things, particularly wealth; and *kama* as enjoyment and the fulfillment of personal desires, particularly sensual delights.[3] These three goals of action (*tri-varya*) are so ordered that the pursuit of *kama* is to be subordinated to the pursuit of *artha*, and *artha* in turn subordinated to the pursuit of dharma. (These three goals are to be distinguished from the fourth and ultimate goal of *mukti*, liberation.) We should note that the hierarchized goals of dharma, *artha*, and *kama* apply to all human beings, and accordingly as groups, castes, lineages, families, or individuals – at all levels – follow or do not follow the prescribed direction of action, they earn superior or inferior fruits of action. But within this large design, as the Purusha myth has shown, different varnas (or *jati*) may be assigned different dharma codes of conduct and may play different roles in the knowledge and upholding of dharma in general. Finally, we may note that this relativity of dharma is given a further dynamic and flexible application in terms of changed conditions of distress (*apaddharma*) and contingencies of self-preservation that may legitimately permit an individual certain actions not preferentially assigned to one's inherited station in life.

The concept of dharma has a multivalent range of meanings that will exercise our expository skills at various points in this book. It would appear

[2] I am here indebted to McKim Marriott and R. Inden (1974, 1973).

[3] These three concepts can be viewed both as "aspects" of action and as goal-oriented "ends" or "domains" of action. My gloss here is in the latter sense and is signified by differentiated texts – Dharmashastra, Arthashastra, Kamasutra.

that the dharmashastric writers accepted at least three sources (*mula*) of dharma in the following descending order: The first and most important source is the canonical literature – the Vedas, the traditions set down in the *smrti* and other auxiliary sources; in cases where no rule has been given, where the law is silent, it appeared that the decision of a council of brahmans learned in the Vedas might be considered authoritative; but, finally, and this was more disputed, the lore and ancient customs of different regions, castes, and so on, could qualify to be subsumed.

The later *smrti* writers developed the notion of dharma along the lines followed by their predecessors. Thus Manu (II 6) gives this enumeration which is reiterated in Vasishtha (1, 4–5) and Yajnavalkya (1, 7): "The whole Veda is the first source of the sacred law, next the Tradition [*smrti*] and the virtuous conduct of those who know the (Veda further), also the customs of holy men, and (finally) self-satisfaction." This acceptance of *sruti*, *smrti*, and *achara* (customs) thus allows for flexibility and disputation in the actual application of dharma, though the canon was considered the support and foundation of dharma. Manu went so far as to say that the king who practices dharma must "inquire into the laws of castes (*jati*), of districts, of guilds (*sreni*) and of families (*kula*) and thus settle the peculiar law of each (VIII 41)."

Three features stand out when we consider the competence of the *kshatriya* ruler as discussed in the dharmashastras:

The primary fact is that the king's activities and functions are not set forth as a separate subject but as part and parcel of a comprehensive scheme of the duties and codes of conduct of the social units. In the scheme of duties the king's duty is primarily that of protection and is developed as a branch of the social ethics under the label *rajadharma*.

In this business of protection, the ruler's activity consists in the wielding of *danda*, the infliction of punishment and the exercise of coercive force, whenever and wherever violation of dharma occurs. The ruler's most important duty is characterized as the upholding and preservation of the social order, particularly the order of varna (and *jati*) as ordained in the canon, and punishment of those actions that lead to confusion and disorder. In Manu we read that the king's power grows and he prospers "by preventing the confusion of castes" and that he should not allow the *vaisyas* and *shudras* to swerve from their duties, for their dereliction "would throw this whole world into confusion" (VIII 172). Thus in the practice of *danda*, the king's adjudicative function (based on canonical and conventional and even judicial precedents) as maintainer of dharma is vital, though the idea that he could creatively legislate new law is largely, if not totally, absent.

But although the king exercises *danda* as punisher and although force resides in him, yet he is not the sole or the most important wielder and possessor of power and authority. Authority is dual and the guarantors of the social order are both the brahman as *acharya* and the ruler. While the

king may enforce the law, it is the brahman who has the best knowledge of the canon and, additionally, by virtue of his own code of conduct and place in the social order is the creative interpreter, codifier, teacher, and adviser on dharma. Thus Sankha asserted, that the brahman's way is superior because he is the preceptor (*guru*) and the first-born (*jyeshtha*). And as Ghoshal explains, one of the reasons adduced for the brahman's "supreme right of way" is that "the Brahmana is entitled to the position of domestic chaplain of the king in accordance with the old Vedic theory of dependence of the temporal power upon the spiritual" (1959, pp. 59–60). The claim is also buttressed by "the original doctrine of the transfer of a share of his [brahman's] good *karma* to the king." Perhaps rather than relying on Ghoshal's use of "spiritual" and "temporal" power to explain the brahman's superior authority, we may say that, among other things, the brahman's superiority rests critically on the fact that he knows and expounds the law, whereas the king implements it through *danda* and in doing so engages in *artha*-type action, which in extreme cases involves killing, both as capital punishment and in warfare. But some of the dharmashastric writers (e.g., Vasishtha, Vishnu, Manu) preserve the king from "impurity" while he occupies the seat of Indra and is engaged in the performance of his royal dharma as upholder. Interestingly, some of the shastric writers postulated a particular relation of *karma* and merit transfer taking place between subjects and their king according to the justness of his use of *danda*. Ghoshal says that this principle "was developed in the later Smritis . . . into the conception of the king's earning one-sixth (or other) share of his subjects' spiritual merits and demerits, according to his protection or otherwise of themselves . . ." (1959, p. 53).

When Manu (VII 3–8) proclaims that the Lord created the king "for the protection of this whole creation" and that the king is formed of the particles of eight deities, Indra, Wind, Yama, Sun, Fire, Varuna, Moon, and Kubera (lord of wealth), he is confirming an old idea about the origins of kingship. Continuing with this idea of a king's divine constitution, Manu proclaims that the king emulates the energetic action of these gods: Indra's sending of copious rains is compared with the king's showering benefits on his kingdom, the Sun's drawing up water with his rays to the king's extracting taxes; as the Wind moves, so will the king's spies penetrate; as the Earth supports all beings equally, so does the king take upon himself the office of the Earth (IX 303–311).

Perhaps it was not until the *Mahabharata* was composed – signifying the age of brahmanical reassertion and renaissance – that we begin to find in the Hindu literature accounts of the origins and legitimacy of the institution of kingship that begin to match the earlier Buddhist canonical and *Jataka* accounts in sophistication. By the time the *Mahabharata* (and the later *smrti* literature) emerged, two most important streams of ideas had been digested by the brahmanical writers and assimilated to the earlier Vedic sources. During the Buddhist interlude, some of the Buddhist ideas

had been incorporated. Also incorporated in the new orthodoxy were the ideas of the arthashastric writers on the practice of *artha* and the exercise of *danda*, the most illustrious work of this school being Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

Thus on the one hand it is remarkable that the *Shantiparva* (*Book of Peace*) section of the *Mahabharata* has two extracts[4] that seek to account for the origins of the legitimate authority of kingship. The accounts seem to combine men's evil state of nature or the moral degeneration of men from a state of grace (as in the Buddhist genesis myth) with the divine election and institution of a king on their behalf by the gods (as in the Vedic idea of divine creation).

On the other hand, the *Mahabharata* also has in the same *Shantiparva* discourses propounded by Bhishma to Yudhishthira (XII 56–167) on the subject of *rajadharma* (royal duties) which show a clear appreciation of the arthashastric discussions on the nature of *dandaniti* and the practical art of government. The notion already known to Manu, that the king is the maker of his epoch, is expounded, and it is argued that "should *dandaniti* perish . . . the three *Vedas* would disappear and the duties would be mixed up. . . . When *dandaniti* is lost and *rajadharma* is abandoned, says God Indra . . . all creatures are affected with confusion through the tyranny of kings. . ." (Ghoshal, p. 193). Again in the *Shantiparva* we have Arjuna saying that the king who possesses the rod of chastisement is awake when all else is under sleep. "For this, the wise have designated the rod of punishment as righteousness itself. . . . If punishment were done away with in this world, creatures would soon be destroyed."[5]

It is to the arthashastric literature that we must now turn if we are to properly appreciate the thrust of some of the Pali canonical pronounce-

[4] Ghoshal summarizes the contents of the two extracts (1959, pp. 194–196); also see Drekmeier (1962, 136–139). The story in the first extract runs as follows: In days of yore people being kingless devoured each other in the fashion of the law of fishes (*matsya-nyana*) in that the stronger ate the weaker and anarchy prevailed. The people pleaded with Brahma for a lord protector, and he ordained that Manu the patriarch undertake the task. To coax Manu into accepting the burden they undertook to pay him one-fifth of their livestock and cash value of precious crops and one-tenth of their common crops.

The second story is more elaborate. The question is asked: How is it that the world submits to one man as to the gods, when that man – the king – is equal to other men in physical and mental attributes, and so on? The origin of kingship is traced back to the Krita age, when there was neither kingdom nor king. At that time the people protected themselves by the rule of righteousness (dharma) alone, but they fell from this state to one of affliction, greed, and wrong acts. When mortals were thrown into confusion, the Vedas and dharma itself were lost, a condition that alarmed the gods, who petitioned Brahma. Brahma wrote the archetypal work on the *dandaniti*; and Vishnu appointed his mind-begotten son Virajas for the task. But kingship reaches its completeness only in the seventh generation from Virajas, when Prithu, fully versed in the Vedas and in the science of polity, was consecrated by Vishnu and Brahma and the lesser gods headed by Indra. Vishnu himself entered the king's person by means of his ascetic power.

[5] *Shantiparva*, 15.2 and 15.30. Quoted in Drekmeier, 1962, p. 138.

ments and moralistic *Jataka* tales on the subject of kingship and righteous rule. There is also the further reason that Asoka's Buddhistic proclamations on the ethics of kingship can best be understood as standing in dialectical contrast to the norms of statecraft propounded by the arthashastric writers.

Of the arthashastric class of works no complete work has survived except Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. Since it occupies a critical position in our exposition of Buddhist materials, we must carefully specify how we are going to use it.

If the attribution is correct that the author of this work, Kautilya (Vishnugupta, Chanakya), was the chief minister of Chandragupta (321 B.C.), the founder of the imperial Maurya dynasty, the destroyer of the Nanda dynasty, and the grandfather of Asoka (296 B.C.), then it can be said that he wrote it around 300 B.C. But this attribution has been debated, and the only safe statement we can make is that Kautilya's *Arthashastra* was composed sometime between 300 B.C. and 300 A.D. This particular literary work will be used by us as an example of the kind of ideas that the arthashastric writers elaborated as opposed to the dharmashastric and Buddhist theorists. Our surmise is that the ideas on kingship and politics mooted in the Buddhist Pali canon and noncanonical *Jatakas* have as their point of reference both the Veda-derived early dharmasutric and more pragmatically oriented arthashastric ideas on *rajadharma* and *dandaniti* of the pre-Mauryan era (i.e., before 300 B.C.). In the case of Asoka, however, his proclamations in the pillar edicts and inscriptions have as their point of reference the politics of his own time, in which the mores of the kind enunciated in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* were obviously current practice. If indeed Kautilya[6] was Asoka's grandfather's Machiavellian minister, then we can plausibly make the strong statement that Asoka's edicts were a denunciation and rejection of the Kautilyan mores; if not, we can equally plausibly surmise that they were a rejection of the kind of mores reported in the work that were operative in his time in dynastic politics.

Kautilya's Arthashastra

It is frequently asserted that Kautilya's work represents an attempt in Indian thought to provide a "rational basis of politics." Perhaps what is meant to be conveyed is that one sees the attempt to differentiate and carve out of *smrti*-type dharmashastric discussion the domain of *artha* and subject it to systematic treatment in terms of its own objectives.

At the beginning of his work[7] Kautilya makes all the proper obeisances that would locate his discussion as coming under the aegis of dharma. Thus he repeats the classical *smrti* versions of the creation of the four varnas and the division into the four stages of life (*ashramas*) and affirms

[6] Some authors transliterate this name as Kautalya as will be seen in the quotations I cite.

[7] Citations are taken from Shamasastry's translation (1960).

that "the king shall never allow people to swerve from their duties; for whoever upholds his own duty, ever adhering to the customs of the Aryas and the . . . rules of caste and divisions of religious life, will surely be happy both here and hereafter" (1, 2).

He also begins his work with a classification of four "sciences" (*sastra*) in the following order: *anvikshaki* (which comprises the philosophy of Sankhya, Yoga, etc.), the triple Vedas, *varta* (agriculture, cattle breeding, and trade), and *dandaniti* ("science" of government). It soon becomes clear that Kautilya is primarily concerned with the last two – with *varta* and *dandaniti* – as the components of the field of *artha*.

Artha is expounded by Kautilya in the last chapter of his work (XV 1) as follows: "The subsistence (*vritti*) of mankind is termed *artha*; the earth (*bhumi*) which contains mankind is termed *artha*; that science which treats of the means of acquiring and maintaining the earth is the Arthashastra." It is clear from this that *artha* stands for those activities which in the West would be described as economics and politics. And in a sense Kautilya's "arthashastra" is concerned with the interrelation and unified administration of the economy and political system as the West understands them. Thus we are told that *varta* and *dandaniti* interrelate in the following fashion:

Agriculture, cattle breeding, and trade constitute *varta*; these activities produce the grain, the cattle, gold, forest produce, and labor. This outcome supports the treasury and the army, which in turn enables the king to control his kingdom (I, IV).

In turn *danda* is the scepter that supports the well-being and progress of the sciences – philosophy, the Vedas, and *varta*. "That which treats of Danda is the law of punishment or science of government (dandaniti)" (I, IV).

Indeed Kautilya proceeds further to propound that the well-being and the progress of the world depend not on an excessively repulsive or inadequately contemptible use of *danda* but on its measured use "as deserved." "For *danda* when awarded with due consideration, makes the people devoted to righteousness and to works productive of wealth and enjoyment . . ." (I, IV).

Before we proceed any further we can make two comments. "Arthashastra" as Kautilya uses the term can be translated as dealing with the "management of political economy" – the term "political economy" being used here in the larger sense shared by both Adam Smith and Karl Marx in the nineteenth century and connoting that these two domains of politics and economics are inextricably intertwined, both nationally and internationally. Thus, for example, Book II of the *Arthashastra* deals with the guts of political economy in the sense that it deals with income, revenue collection by the collector general, accounting procedures (that would have impressed Max Weber, who regarded accounting as a distinctive feature of the emergence of capitalism), the code of conduct and method of super-

vision of government officials to prevent corruption and embezzlement, the management of mining and manufacturing operations, the economic monopolies of the king, and so on. And Books VI and VII are concerned with the source and maintenance of "state sovereignty" and the conduct of diplomacy with foreign states including waging war and making alliances. The most celebrated aspect of this discussion is the enumeration of the seven elements of sovereignty (*saptanga*) and the *mandala* strategy of alliance and warfare.

Thus, considering the time at which it was compiled, complex and detailed considerations of the issues of arthashastra were possible because Kautilya, despite his initial *pro forma* gesture to *smrti* orthodoxy, asserts that economic activity provides the material support for the practice of coercive authority, which is the basis and support of the social and cultural orders. Indeed at one point Kautilya proclaimed in the third person: "Kautilya holds that *artha,* and *artha* alone, is important, inasmuch as charity and desire depend upon *artha* for their realisation." Most translators render incorrectly and too narrowly *artha* in this context as "wealth."

Ghoshal compares the conceptualization of "the public functions of the king" in the arthashastric genre of literature with the theory of *rajadharma* as propounded in the canonical dharmasutras in these terms: The *Arthashastra* "concerns itself as a rule with the inductive investigation of the phenomena of the state, while *Rajadharma* deals with the same as an incident in a comprehensive scheme of class duties deriving their source primarily from the eternal *Vedas*" (1959, p. 82). The former is therefore able to grapple with the concrete problems of administration and state institutions. Secondly, *Arthashastra* "is the product of the independent schools and individual teachers working more or less on lines distinct from the Brahmanical canon. Hence it lacks the positive character attaching to the *Rajadharma* by virtue of the latter's association with the great concept of Law" (dharma)[8] (p. 82). Finally, says Ghoshal, there is a difference between them from the point of view of ethics, in that the rules of *rajadharma,* which is equivalent to the "whole duty of the king," are determined "by the ideal of the highest good of this individual," while the *Arthashastra,* which avowedly had as its end the security and prosperity of the state, accordingly deals with the rules of kingly conduct as being determined "primarily with reference to the interest of the State" (p. 82).

In a somewhat similar vein Drekmeier comments on Kautilya's distinctiveness in these terms:

> There can never be a thorough going divorce of politics and ethics for Kautalya; he never denies that the ultimate purpose of the state is a moral purpose, the

[8] The inferior authority of arthashastra in comparison with dharmashastra (including the treatment of *rajadharma*) is clearly indicated in the later *smrti* literature. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the *Arthashastra* is characterized as a minor *Veda* (*upaveda*) in the *Charanavynha,* meaning that unlike the dharmashastra it is lacking in full Vedic authority.

maintenance of *dharma*. This is not to say that the state has no justification of its own; and when morality does find a place in Kautalyan politics, expedience continues to be served. When Kautalya remarks that might and self-aggrandizement are more important than religion and morality, he means that moral principle must be subordinated to the interests of the state inasmuch as the moral order depends upon the continued existence of the state. . . . The Arthashastra represents an important step in the direction of authority based on interests and concerns shared by all, authority which takes unto itself many functions previously reserved to institutions outside the state proper . . . (1962, pp. 201, 205).

We could add a further gloss to these elucidations. Kautilya, while attempting to probe and systematize the problems, strategies, and rules of instrumental action pertaining to political economy, did not and could not, given the priority of dharma in brahmanical thought, arrive at a position that could claim that society and political economy are the same or that the polis in the classical Greek sense (or some such political definition of society), in which man finds his highest realization and from which he cannot be rightly considered apart, is meaningful for India. What in fact later *smrti* and *Mahabharata* expositions did was both to subordinate the arthashastric notions to dharma and then to proceed to include them within the scope of *rajadharma*.[9] It is at this macrolevel of formulation that we should look for a difference in the Buddhist conceptualization of the same realms of action.

There is a great notoriety attached to certain sections of Kautilya. In fact Max Weber, in his celebrated essay "Politics as a Vocation" remarked appositely that "the caste order allowed for the possibility of fashioning the Dharma of each single caste, from those of the ascetics and Brahmans to those of the rogues and harlots, in accordance with the immanent and autonomous laws of their respective occupations. War and politics were also included." He then went on to say: "This specialization of ethics allowed for the Indian ethic's quite unbroken treatment of politics by following politics' own law and even radically enhancing this royal art." Then the unexpected bombshell follows: "A really radical 'Machiavellianism,' in the popular sense of this word, is classically represented in Indian literature, in the *Kautalya Arthashastra*. . . . In contrast with this document Machiavelli's *Principe* is harmless" (Gerth and Mills 1946, pp. 123–124).

This alleged radical Machiavellianism should be placed in its proper perspective, toward which Weber partially points the way, despite his occasional lapse into uncharacteristic melodrama. The Machiavellianism of Kautilya refers to the advocacy at certain points of espionage, prostitution, lawless break-ins, opportunistic diplomacy, self-serving use of force

[9] We have already discussed how the *Mahabharata* does this. It is noteworthy that Manu (IX 294–299) not only enumerates the seven *anga* of the kingdom along arthashastric lines but also recommends: "By spies, by a (pretended) display of energy, and by carrying out (various) undertakings, let the king constantly ascertain his own and his enemy's strength."

to bolster sovereignty, the assassination of princes "wanting in filial affection" because "princes like crabs have a notorious tendency of eating up their begetter" (XVII 1). (We may say in passing that in this year of "revelations," 1973, these admonitions lose much of their propensity to shock unduly in the light of Watergate and the White House "dirty tricks" – or, as John Mitchell will have it the "White House horrors" – and the U.S. administration's secret policies in the pursuit of balance of power overseas.)

But on the credit side of the balance sheet, Kautilya also advocates at other places what must be recognized as a classical statement of the king's welfare obligations (*kshemakrit*) as enunciated by *smrti* writers, a conception that Buddhist canonical literature was to elevate and elaborate into an encompassing theory of kingship. Advises Kautilya:

> He [the king] shall also construct reservoirs (*setu*), filled with water either perennial or drawn from some other source. Or he may provide with sites, roads, timber, and other necessary things those who construct reservoirs of their own accord. Likewise in the construction of places of pilgrimage (*punyasthana*) and of groves.
>
> The king shall provide the orphans (*bala*), the aged, the infirm, the afflicted, and the helpless with maintenance. He shall also provide subsistence to helpless women when they are carrying and also to the children they give birth to (II 1).

But let us return to the larger design of Kautilya's work. A significant feature of this is Kautilya's enumeration of the seven constituent elements (*prakriti*) of the political organization (*rajya*) (or, as others have rendered it, of "sovereignty"). The king (*svami*), the officials/ministers (*amatya*), the country or rural area (*janapada*), the fortified (or urban) area (*durga*), the treasury (*kosa*), the army (*bala*), and the (permanent) foreign ally (*mitra*) – these seven elements are said to be the "limb-like elements of sovereignty" (VI 1). Arthashastric writers disputed the constituent elements, their priority, and relative weight, but they used them to discuss the conditions that lead to diseased political conditions (*vyasana*) by their absence. Such pragmatic discussion of the seven elements should be compared with the notion of the seven treasures of the *cakkavatti* postulated in the Buddhist literature in order that we may appreciate the difference in ideological tone between the Buddhist and arthashastric theories of kingship.

4. The Early Buddhist Conception of World Process, Dharma, and Kingship

Our analysis of the myth of genesis contained in the *Agganna Suttanta* showed that it had a balanced structure with the king on the one side mediating between social disorder and the formation of the four *vannas* (orders), of society itself, and with the *bhikkhu* on the other side, drawn from all four vannas, transcending society, mediating between home and homelessness and entering the path that leads from *lokiya*, this world, to *lokottara*, the other world of liberation. He (i.e., the *bhikkhu*) therefore is chief of them all, the king, the *khattiya*, the *brahmanas*, the *vessa*, and the *sudda*.

Early Buddhist literature contains instances of denunciation and devaluation of *khattavijja*, the *kshatriya* "science" of exercising coercive power. A Pali canonical text (*Digha Nikaya* 1, p. 9) declares that *khattavijja* belongs to a group of low arts (*tirachchhanavijja*) and wrongful occupations (*michchhajiva*) by which false ascetics and brahmans earn their livelihood. What is being railed against is not so much the ruling function per se but that kind of brahmanical – particularly arthashastric – formulation that went so far as to identify the *kshatriya* way of life with manipulative action inspired by self-preservation and self-interest. The Buddhist objections to certain arthashastric notions are, for example, portrayed in certain *Jataka* tales. In one story (No. 528) an ascetic denounces to the king the false doctrine of his ministers, a doctrine that condones the killing of parents, siblings, and friends if self-interest demands it. Again in a second story (No. 546) a sage rebukes the king about the sinfulness of turning against a friend when the king in justification of his act expounds the sayings of *kshatriyas* (*khattiyamaya*), which advocate that one should rescue one's self from distress by any means gentle or severe and afterward make amends by practicing compensatory righteousness. In a third story (No. 537) a virtuous prince repudiates the duties of the *kshatriya* as being contrary to morality and keeps his plighted word to a man-eating monster. In all these examples the Buddhist view advocates reciprocity as against self-interest, and an "unqualified supremacy of the moral law over governmental affairs" in contradistinction to that brand of arthashastric thought that recommends the objective of maximum advantage to the ruler and his polity. The Buddhist objection to the *kshatriya*

code of conduct is not against the practice of politics as such but against a narrow definition of it. In its place it tries to substitute a theory of politics that is ethically comprehensive.

First let us deal with certain alleged antibrahmanical features of Buddhist thought. If it is the case that early Buddhism attempted to make an alternative formulation to the brahmanical creed, then we must know what it is that it rejected so as to understand better what it substituted.

It is said that "the Buddha assailed the Brahmanical priesthood and challenged its theological and ritual theories" (Gokhale 1966, p. 66). Apart from the fact of Buddha's open recruitment to his order of monks and nuns of brahmans and *shudras* alike, the further assertion is that the Buddha attacked the ritualism of the brahmans, especially the ritual of sacrifice, which had developed into "a quasi-mechanical rite, wherein the gods tended to recede into the background," and which, as in the *Brahmanas*, made claims to being "a mysterious force, inexorable, external and all-pervasive," that benefited both priest and patron (p. 64).[1] There is also the evidence of some of the canonical *suttas* in which the Buddha assails the brahmans for their belief in excellence based on birth and not on deed, and for preoccupation with the performance of ritual and traffic with gods rather than with the pursuits of a recluse.

The Buddhist objections to brahmanism so phrased do not penetrate to the heart of the Buddhist rejection. For real illumination we may, by way of example, consult Paul Mus' essay "Thousand-Armed Kannon" (1964) and Stcherbatsky's *The Central Conception of Buddhism* (1923), which though largely concerned with early Sanskritic literature, yet speak for all schools of early Buddhism as regards certain fundamental conceptions.[2]

Mus argues that the critical Buddhist doctrine that attacked the citadel of Vedic and early Hindu thought was the negation of the self and personality (P., *anatta*; Skt., *nairatmya*). The Vedic teachings and ritual rested on the interrelations among three entities: (1) the microcosm, which was the individual self (*adhyatman*, i.e., man, *purusha*), (2) the cosmos, which was the world soul, including the world and the gods (*adhibhutam, adhidevatam*), and (3) the term intervening as an operational mediator between them, namely, "sacrifice" (*adhiyajnam*). This system was more

[1] Or as La Valée Poussin (1917) put it: "The Vedic priests ventured to think that their hymns, formulae and rites were, not only the invigorating power that helps the gods in the struggle for light and waters but 'the condition even of the normal course of things.' Sacrifice prevents the world from lapsing into chaos. Further if sacrifice is the actual cosmogonical agency, it must probably at the beginning have been the cosmogonical factor" (p. 23).

[2] As Stcherbatsky comments, the *anatma-dharma* theory and its corollary classification of elements into *skandha, ayatma*, and *dhatu*, the laws of their interconnexion (*pratitya-samutpada*) . . . are formulations common to all forms of Buddhism" (p. 67). Both Mus and Stcherbatsky copiously use Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa*, a Sanskritic work later than the Pali canon but approximately of the same age as the Pali commentaries. It consists of a commentary on the *abhidharma* of the Sarvastivadin school, "one of the earliest, if not the earliest, of Buddhist sects" (Stcherbatsky, p. 2).

than merely religious in its aspects – it was deeply social and even political in its reality and implications, on which the brahman supremacy rested.

On the basic construct of the self, usually called *atman*, rested the sociological institution of the joint family, its pattern of authority and rites of perpetuation, and the political institution, on a larger scale, of the state and the Hindu monarchy, buttressed by brahman functionaries. Thus the brahmanical ritual, especially that of sacrifice, gave reality to these social entities of self, family, caste, and kingship and placed the brahmans in the position of authenticators and guarantors of the society. We can now let Mus speak in his evocative manner:

> The whole enterprise thus definitely rested on the Brahmanical use of the theory of the *atman* in its sociological and constructive, rather than just psychological and philosophical aspect. This will make easier to understand why and how Ancient Buddhism, when it substituted its own Moral and Cosmic Law (*dharma*)[3] for the abstract *brahman* of the Brahmans and for the personal Isvara of the Hindus, denounced so radically the practices of the established religion as an instance of the "Fallacy of the Self (*atmavada*)." . . . And so half way between the Cosmic climate of the World and the level of individual Consciousness, an elementary social unit, based on Sacrifice, acted as a formal middle term, capitalized, under the guise of the *atman* theory, on its leader and controller, the Purusa or Grhapati ("householder"; *pati* "chief" from the same root as Lat. *potestas*, Gr. *despotes*). . . .
>
> A similar pattern was established at State level, on a much larger scale, as was but natural, and with greater, often extravagant elaboration and expenditure. It was above all a norm of adjustment and unification applied in common to the various elements and levels of a differential system. By a bold and constructive move, taking advantage of the previously described plane of cleavage, it centralized and capitalized on a typical Hindu monarch, supported by the Brahmans and supporting them, the endless variety of the local geographical, ethnical, linguistic and historical circumstance. The *Institutes of Manu*, that textbook of Medieval and Colonial Hinduism – still true, in many respects, to the Vedic ideal – describe Sovereignty as a multifarious Sacrifice, perpetually carried on, not only by the Royal Chaplain (*purohita*) but by all the subjects in their very lives and ordinary deportments. The protection (*abhaya*) given to them by the King was the equivalent and symbol of a ritual honorarium (*daksina*), in exchange of which the general benefit and benediction of the allegorical sacrifice could accrue to the Monarch; in the terminology of the Brahmana, his subjects became part of him or other Selves of him (*anya atman*), while he enjoyed (*bhuj*) them as his proper food (*anna* cf. *annadya*). Magically and juridically, such was the foundation of his right to levy taxes (pp. 21–24).

Thus the Buddhist doctrine of nonself was not of import at a philosophical and personal level only – it could act as the dissolvent of a system of social forms as well. The doctrine first of all "dissolved the erroneous

[3] Sanskrit, *dharma;* Pali, *dhamma.* Both renderings will occur interchangeably throughout this book, as well as with other concepts, e.g., *chakravartin* (Skt.), *cakkavatti* (P.); *nirvana* (Skt.), *nibbana* (P.).

assumption of a personality in atomic elements, a direct reversal of the Brahmanical belief in the absolute reality and universal extension of the self" (p. 3). The theoretical move was

> to confer full reality to the atomic elements (*dharma*) into which the new line of thinking resolved "personality" i.e. the impermanent and finally selfless compounds that we erroneously conceive as subjects of creatures. . . . However this dissolution led to no anarchy. The *dharma* were "informed" or conditioned into unstable but well defined appearances and were further inescapably apportioned from one atomic instant . . . to another by the Law of *Karman*, Art, and *Phala*, Fruit, as a consequence of good and evil actions previously accomplished in the sequence (*samtana, samtati*) mistaken by immature, puerile minds (*bala*, children) for Selves, Souls or Subjects . . . (p. 11).

But the Buddhist offensive using the doctrine of nonself could not merely rest in a negative dissolution. In rejecting all patterns of unity in favor of atomic pluralism, there was the danger that there would be no room in such a philosophy for "an ultimate reality of collective responsibility, built on the notion of an extended or joint personality – the very foundation of the Brahmanical culture and civilization" (p. 12). The crucial problem Buddhism had to face was that of moral responsibility where there was no absolute self to shoulder it in a pluralistic atomic perspective. How could the world around man make sense to him if he had no personal unity and could not trust his perceptions of himself?

Early Buddhism did in fact put together a picture of a world as a collective system. Arising in the Indian milieu it made use of the cosmological mode of thought already around it; it used the constructs of Mount Meru as the axis and axle, and of world systems, their formations and reformations, in new arrangements and with new implications. We need to appreciate the fact, if our argument in this book is to make an impact, that the Buddha's initial teachings, which embody his first experiences, are distinctly situated on the cosmological plane, not merely the individual, and, furthermore, that from the beginning it had collective social and moral implications. When we say that Buddhism must be understood as a "total phenomenon," this is partly what we have in mind, as we shall try to demonstrate. Once again let us resort to Mus for the declaration of our manifesto:

> The canonical description of the Buddha's first experiences as well as the terms in which his initial teachings have been committed to writing are distinctly situated on the cosmological, not on the individual plane. Buddhism, in its full historical significance, is not just a psychological and somewhat paradoxical revelation, curiously developing into a world religion. . . . In fact, it proved a social as well as a moral revolution. It had enough practical efficacity not only to renovate for a period of several centuries the style and sense of life in India, but to expand all over Central, Eastern and Southeastern Asia . . . (p. 25).

For the Buddhist "construction of social reality" resort was made, among other media, to a Buddhist cosmology – in terms of the periodical

creations and resorptions of the universe as an ordered set of events. It was essential that such an account not contradict the basic philosophical propositions, as were covered in the Four Noble Truths regarding suffering and its removal; that its cosmology not present a solidarity and coherence to events as "a system of ideas that could be true independently of its process of realization" through the actions of actors, nor attribute "a gross existence that would be independent of what we may know, or not, of it" (p. 26).

Bharati makes an apt comparison between the Hindu and Buddhist schemes with which we can begin the discussion of the building blocks of the Buddhist construction of social reality:

> This is the situation: The Hindu insists on the notions of a Self, or a transcendent-immanent personality principle, or an *atman* or *brahman*. The Buddhist, in theory at least, denies any self or any super-self. However, in practice the Vajrayana and to a certain extent all Mahayana Buddhist doctrines have a sort of *Ersatz*-self or super-self, something which defies any treatment in terms of the Hindu "entity-postulating" languages, yet it has some sort of subsistence . . . the principle, or quasi-entity which Mahayana and Vajrayana accepts (*Sunyata*, Buddhahood, and all the complexes which Tantric Buddhism personifies in its dieties . . .) is not a principle accepted *in lieu of* the Hindu entity, but it is a principle accepted *in spite of* the Hindu principle, and arrived at by totally different speculative processes. . . . The Buddhist dialectician proceeds from the denial of any entity, from the axiom of momentariness, and arrives at the notion of *Sunya*; the Hindu dialectician has a built-in deity as the basis for his speculations on a self, on a static entity. . . . Buddhism has no ontology, no metaphysics; Hinduism has a powerful ontology – this is the one unbridgeable difference between all of its forms and Buddhism of all schools (pp. 25–26).

Stcherbatsky builds up the central conception of Buddhism in this way. Existence is an interplay of a plurality of subtle, ultimate elements called dharmas; these elements "alone are realities"; they have no duration but manifest as momentary "consecutive appearances" and flashings of new elements; they however cooperate with one another, and the "laws of interconnexion" prevailing between them (by which some elements appear accompanied by others in close contiguity with them) produce the world process.

> The world-process is thus a process of cooperation between . . . the subtle, evanescent elements, and such is the nature of *dharmas* that they proceed from causes (*hetu-prabhara*) and steer towards extinction (*nirodha*). . . . Influenced (*sasrava*) by the element *avidya* [ignorance], the process is in full swing.[4] Influenced by the element *prajña* [understanding], it has a tendency

[4] The elements of moral defilement (*kleça*) are always present in a life and they affect the stream of life, pollute and soil the other elements and cause "unrest" in them. "The primary cause of this unhappy condition is 'illusion' (avidya), the first and fundamental member in the wheel of life. It continues to exist and exhibit its influence as

towards appeasement and final extinction. In the first case streams (*santana*) of combining elements are produced which correspond to ordinary men. . . ; in the second the stream represents a saint (*arya*). The complete stoppage of the process of phenomenal life corresponds to the Buddha. . . . The final result of the world-process is its suppression, Absolute Calm: all co-operation is extinct and replaced by immutability (p. 74).

Vasubandhu's elaboration of the philosophical tenets of the cosmology appears to make explicit what is implicit in much of the Theravada literature. The most important construction is "the theory of the Receptacle-World" (*Bhajanaloka*), which is a product of the good and evil actions of living creatures as a whole, integrating "in its general structure all the sequences of actions, results of actions and actions again, that we consider so erroneously to be autonomous subjects or souls" (Mus, p. 13). "A crucial point is thus reached in the history of Buddhist doctrines. Vasubandhu's statement explicitly projects in the world as a whole more than is to be found, analytically, in its constituents, as these can be nothing more, in strict orthodoxy, than the various retributions separately meted out to all creatures by the Law of Karman, each of them in its own Destruction" (pp. 13–14). La Valée Poussin (1917) explains the cosmological construction in early Buddhism as follows: ". . . at the beginning of a cosmic period, the whole material universe is created by the 'mastering' energy of the mass of the ancient acts that are to be enjoyed by its future inhabitants. The 'receptacle world' (*bhajanaloka*) is the 'fruit of mastery' of the mass of the acts of the 'world of living beings' (*sattvaloka*)." Mus goes so far as to say that Vasubandhu's notion of the receptacle world comes close to our modern statistical modes of thinking, and he invokes Gestalt theory and Russell's "class that is not a member of itself" in order to explicate it.

By various intricate links the receptacle world considered as the universal recipient of the transmigratory processes, but distinguished from the Vedic belief in the reality of a composite being and creator of the universe, was associated with the cosmic law and the notion of sovereignty which as "non-efficient causality" can be likened to the constitutional axiom of the king who reigns but does not govern. Thus early Buddhism substituted its own moral and cosmic law (dharma) for the abstract brahman of the brahmans and for the personal Isvara of the Hindus, which were denounced as productions of the fallacy of the self. The law of causation was so rearranged as to become a self-ordinating process; it did not stand for absolute divine creation of the world but postulated an awakening produced by the law of retribution. And the cosmology that was forged used the root paradigm of Mount Meru, which "Facing all the directions

long as the 'wheel' turns, and is gradually neutralised and finally stopped by an antidote in the form of transcending wisdom (prajña amala). . . . This process of gradual extinction of the *kleças*, and the consequent purification of life is the ultimate aim of the Buddhist doctrine" (Stcherbatsky, p. 34).

assembled under its 'polar' supremacy, that controlling center cybernetically conditions them to what they have to be, in order to provide the creatures reborn there with a fitting set of Retributions" (Mus, p. 29).

We may summarize Vasubandhu's contribution as follows. Having dismantled the Vedic system based on the reality of the self, he builds up the receptacle world through the increasing density produced by the chains of action and their retribution, from which emerges a discernible pattern of dharma, which the Buddha comes to objectify. A cumulative stream of ever-greater attachment followed by ever-greater retribution in the form of rebirth, causing an unrest and defilement of the elements, when informed by understanding (*prajña*) show a way out through consciously avoiding attachment. The collective action of all living beings produces the world as a whole, as a gradual process of increasing density in the world starting from a level of pure spirituality down to the level of grossest materiality; but paradoxically an antidotal ordinating process asserts itself in the form of the order (dharma) of the world, and finally the resorption of the world follows the same steps in an inverted ascending order. Similar propositions are embodied in the Theravada myth of genesis (*Agganna Suttanta*), which asserted that the corrective factor in the economy of the world was the institution of kingship and that the way to the resorption of the world is shown by the *bhikkhu* who breaks the bonds of society and ascends into the spiritual realms.

The next stage in our exposition, then, is to appreciate the transition made in ancient Buddhist canonical literature from the conception of dharma in its encompassing aspect as a cosmologically ordinating pattern to its signification as order in the sociopolitical realm (dharma). We have already noted that the genesis myth allocates to the king the role of ordinator in the evolving and restless commotion-ridden world.

This corrective feature is in the canonical literature woven into the notion of *mahapurusha*, the great man and man total. The Buddha is *mahapurusha* par excellence, but his real role in the cosmological process is to reveal it, not to be part of it, while the second *mahapurusha* is the *cakkavatti*, the virtuous wheel-rolling world ruler who is a manifestation of the same incomparable perfection and who in his exalted capacity maintains in human affairs as much of the dharma that remains amid the general degradation of things. "Mount Meru's massive presence, stabilizing the world, is explicitly likened to the throne and power of the *chakravartin*, who makes the wheel of righteousness to revolve round that center. His rule thus appears, in the Buddhist image of the world, as a moral and 'ordinating' service of the Community – a fit substitute for the Vedic Sacrifice and sacrificial power (brahman)" (Mus, p. 30). Thus Buddhism, destructive at the level of the theory of self and human personality, having ousted with its theory of nonself the brahmanical system of ideas and ritual, was now able to move forward with its constructive and positive concerns on the social plane. The social preoccupation is restored and

worked out through Buddhist kingship, a corrective power discernible in the cosmogonic process, a service "making for the best and economizing the worst, on behalf of what may be called the commonwealth of transmigration," fulfilling its capacity through its power to protect or shelter and to donate and give.

Both Mahayana and Theravada strands of Buddhism developed conceptions of *bodhisattva;* the former developed the stronger notion of the transcendental *bodhisattva* "as a future Buddha currently serving as an intercessor" and the latter the related but weaker conception of the coming Buddha "who will, if we can be alive when he comes, preach us to salvation" (Lehman 1972, p. 374) in the capacity of a wheel-turning *sammsambuddha.*[5]

From here onward the two traditions make differently accented elaborations. In addition to the general cult of *bodhisattvas* who defer their entry into nirvana in order to help others in the quest for liberation, Mahayana Buddhism developed in florid style the figure of Avalokitesvara, who with his eleven heads and thousand hands represented an inexhaustible repository of protection and liberality, the two main attributes of sovereignty, terrestrial and heavenly. Theravada Buddhism on the other hand, apart from its reverence for the Buddha as the compassionate teacher, assimilated ideas of *bodhisattva* to kingship and concentrated on the theory and norm of its *cakkavatti* and the righteous ruler (and through it toward actual historical kingship itself).

The Buddhist Cakkavatti and *Dharma* (*Righteousness*)

Our thesis on the Buddhist conception of the sociopolitical order and of kingship is as follows:

Firstly, as we have seen, the Buddhist view of the origins of the world system not only rejects divine creation but, more importantly, the system of varnas with its particular allocation of the interpretation of dharma and the performance of sacrifice to the brahman, the allocation of a delimited code of kingship (*rajadharma*) to the *kshatriya* whose duty is to apply force (*danda*) in political regulation. Secondly, it also rejected the arthashastric notions of self-interested politics, the "science" of *dandaniti.*

The Buddhist theory, having swept away with the doctrine of *anatta* the world of social forms as legitimated by the brahman, substituted first the sovereignty of cosmic law, and through it a notion of corrective process

[5] Lehman (personal communication) has brought to my attention a further acute comparison that has relevance for the discussion that shortly follows: "The [above] difference goes hand in hand with the more fundamental one involved in the two traditions, since in the Theravada 'the community' is the Order only and in Mahayana, following directly from its *mahasanghika* foundations, 'the community' includes the laity. Now, the Order of Bhikkhus have no need of a transcendental representative of *dharma* but the laity, if of the community (*sangha*), does. Thus, for Mahayana the polity is part of the very body of the *sangha,* whilst in Theravada it is context only."

(dharma), which gave some semblance of order and direction to the disorderly interconnection of karmic processes and retributions.

This corrective process is identified in Theravada Buddhism with the righteous ruler. The Buddhist reformulation in contraposition to the Vedic and brahmanical theory is a transformation that made the Buddhist notion of the supremacy of dharma in the governing activities of the ruler distinctively different from the dharmashastric notion of the supremacy of dharma over *artha*. The Buddhist conception makes the universalistic assertion that dharma (in its manifold aspects as cosmic law that regulates the world totality and as the truth embodied in the Buddha's teachings that shows the path to liberation) is the absolutely encompassing norm and that the code of kingship embodying righteousness (dharma) has its source in this dharma and is ideally a concrete manifestation of it in the conduct of worldly affairs. Thus as against the dharmashastric position that dharma encompasses and subordinates *artha* and that society (including the society of varnas and *jati*) is wider than the domain of "political economy," the Buddhist position is that dharma informs and suffuses the code of conduct of the righteous ruler and, moreover, that it is his ruling activities (in the domain of political economy) that give form to society, or alternatively serve as the receptacle of society and, therefore, by extension as the mold of society itself.

Unlike the dharmashastric varna-linked and therefore relative codes of conduct, Buddhism at one level of assertion holds the truth (dharma) revealed by the Buddha to be of universal relevance, applicable to all irrespective of station in life. The ethic of dharma is one of absolute imperatives (though creatures according to their karmic achievements realize it differently). Hence unlike the brahmanical cutting of the cake into the hierarchized domains of dharma, *artha*, *kama*, the Buddhist slicing is in terms of two levels – the dharma, as cosmic law and as truth (the seeker of which is the renouncing *bhikkhu*), encompassing the dharma of the righteous ruler, which attempts to give order to this world. The former brackets the latter.

This is beautifully stated in the *Anguttara Nikaya* (*The Book of the Gradual Sayings*, Woodward 1933):

> "Monks, the rajah who rolls the wheel (of state), a Dhamma man, a Dhamma Rajah, rolls on indeed no unroyal wheel."
>
> And when he had thus spoken, a certain monk said to the Exalted One: "But who, lord, is the rajah of the rajah, the roller of the wheel, the Dhamma man, the Dhamma rajah?"
>
> "It is Dhamma, monk!" said the Exalted One.
>
> "Herein, monk, the rajah, the wheel roller, the Dhamma man, the Dhamma rajah, relies just on Dhamma, honours Dhamma, reveres Dhamma, esteems Dhamma; with Dhamma as his standard, with Dhamma as his banner, with Dhamma as his mandate, he sets a Dhamma watch and bar and ward for folk within his realm" (Vol. III, iii [133], pp. 114–115).

It is clear that the "rajah of the rajah" or "king of the righteous king" (*dhammikassa dhammaranno raja*) is a conception of dharma that contains and suffuses the king's code. As Ghoshal states: "The most important contribution of the early Buddhist canonists to the store of our ancient political thought consists in their 'total' application of the principle of righteousness to the branches of the king's internal and foreign administration" (p. 69). Although this statement is apt, we should not think that the priority of dhamma as expressed here is exhausted by the notion of "righteousness." For as we have seen, beyond righteousness as an "ordinating process" in this world lies the larger conception of the norm, the cosmic law itself, and beyond that again the truth that transcends all historical and empirical entities, nirvana: "There is, O Bhikkhus, that which is not born, not-become, not-made, and not-conditioned. If this not-born, not-become, not-made, and not-conditioned were not, then there would be apparent no release from that which is born, become, made and conditioned" (*Udama*, VIII, 3).

In other words, before we go on to consider the concepts of wheel-rolling *cakkavatti* and the righteous ruler (*dhammiko dhammaraja*), we must place in proper perspective this fundamental tension in Theravada Buddhism, which is resolved in terms of inclusive dominions of dharma, each higher level subordinating the other. The dharma of cosmic law and its transcendence (nibbana) are larger in scope and superior to the dharma of righteousness as practiced by the ruler; this hierarchical arrangement parallels the gradient from spirituality to gross materiality in the genesis myth, and the dichotomy between *lokuttara* and *laukiya* in the cosmology.

In this two-level breakdown, however, inhere certain latent dialectical tensions, if not contradictions, as well as reciprocities that we may briefly mention here and develop later. The first relates to the sangha and the *bhikkhus* who compose it. They are oriented to the more embracing domain of dharma, while at the same time being physically located in society under the aegis of a king whose (lower) dharma of righteousness pertains to this world. This location of the sangha in society though it is not of that society thus produces a dialectic in their relationship.

But this dialectic is one of reciprocity as well. Kingship as the crux of order in society provides the conditions and the context for the survival of *sasana* (religion). They need each other: religion in being supported by an ordered and prosperous society is able to act as the "field of merit" in which merit making can be enacted and its fruits enjoyed, while the king as the foremost merit maker needs the sangha to make and realize his merit and fulfill his kingship.

A second tension stems from the early Buddhists' envisaging the state or polity as concerned with the promotion of righteousness, a concept universal in its implications. The symbol of dharma in political life for the Buddhists was the wheel (*cakka*), which replaces the scepter or rod (*danda*), the symbol for authority in the dharmashastric and Kautilyan

doctrines. It is this total application of dharma to politics that in theory insisted on the principle of nonviolence (*ahimsa*), noninjury and compassion (*karuna*) in statecraft, an ideal that sometimes collided with the practicalities of statecraft.[6] It is perhaps this tension that finds expression as an "identity crisis" among the great kings of Buddhist polities – and its resolution in terms of the renunciation of violence *after* accomplishing conquest and empire building. Anyway, we know that the history of Buddhist kingship in India and in Southeast Asia shows no less violence in domestic and external relations than other polities.

Concerning the distinctive contributions of the early Buddhists to political theory in ancient India, Gokhale writes:

> The most important element introduced was the acceptance of a higher morality as the guiding spirit behind the state. . . . Secondly, the early Buddhists also put forward the theory of the two "wheels," two distinct realms of action by positing two separate but equally important ideals of a Cakkavatti, the leader of the temporal realm, and the Bodhisattva, pre-eminent in the spiritual domain. The theory of the two domains is well expressed by a putative statement of Ajatasattu (circa 443–462 B.C.) at the commencement of the First Buddhist Council held in Rajagaha when he said to the assembled monks, "yours is the authority of the spirit as mine is of power" (*dhammacakka* and *anacakka*).[7]

Ghoshal's otherwise excellent summary reflects the same dichotomy: "The World-ruler it is held, is the temporal counterpart of the spiritual World-teacher, resembling him not only in his outward bodily form (the so-called thirty-two bodily signs of the superman) and the extraordinary incidents of his birth, death, cremation and commemoration, but also in their jointly unique role as universal benefactors" (p. 79).

While being appreciative of the complementary relationship between the wielders of the two wheels as stated by these authors, we need not accept that the translations "authority of the spirit" and "power" or the "spiritual" and "temporal" realms render their sense best. We would prefer they be translated as the wheel of morality and the wheel of dominion (which does not exclude considerations of righteousness and which is in a dependent relationship to the former).

There exists a fund of eloquent literature on the Buddhist ideas relating to the world ruler, *cakkavatti*, and the righteous ruler, *dhammiko dhammaraja*, which makes it unnecessary to deal with them at great length here.[8]

[6] But note that in the *Anguttara Nikaya* the Buddha is reported as saying that one of the five qualities that enables a raja to rule abidingly is "his strength in the four divisions of his army, loyal and alert to commands" (*The Book of Gradual Sayings*, Vol. 3, p. 115); also that one of the five possessions that makes a warrior raja's eldest son make rule his aim is that in "elephant, horse, chariot, bow and sword skill, he is fully trained" (p. 117).

[7] "Early Buddhist Kingship," p. 22.

[8] For example, the following works provide a good coverage of the literature together with textual references, both canonical and from the *Jatakas*:

Ghoshal, especially Chs. 4, 11, 19; Gokhale, "*Dhammiko Dhammaraja*. A Study in

I should limit myself to highlighting those features that illuminate the central concerns of this book and to suggesting a few interpretations not usually made in the literature.

We mentioned earlier, when citing Mus, that the transition from cosmology to the sociopolitical order is also reflected in the characterization of the two great men – the Buddha as the revealer and nonparticipating transcender of the cosmic law and the *cakkavatti* as providing the "ordinating service" within the general degradation of the world process.

Students of Buddhism are familiar with the momentous *suttas* that compare the Buddha and the *cakkavatti*. One such is the *Mahapadana Suttanta* (Rhys Davids 1910, Vol. III, Part II). In it there is the biography (which was later transferred to the Buddha himself) of a former Buddha Vipassi who was born of royal status, was endowed with the 32 marks of the great man, and to whom two careers were open – the career of a householder, a lord of the wheel, righteous ruler of the four quarters, or the career of one who goes forth into the homeless state, an *arahant*, a Buddha supreme "rolling back the veil from the world." Thus it is implied that a world conqueror and a world renouncer are two sides of the same coin; yet it is also noteworthy that the Buddhas in question already born of royal status chose the latter path as the greater one.

Again the revealer of the truth and the ruler of the world and "guardian of the people's good" are brought together in the *Maha-Parinibbana Sutta* (Rhys Davids 1881)[9] in an interesting way, wherein after the death of the Buddha, his disciple Ananada, instructs the Mallas of Kusinara that the bodily remains of the Tathagata must be treated like the remains of "a king of kings," that is, after conducting an elaborate cremation at the four crossroads, they should erect a *dagaba* at the spot. Thus the bodily remains of the Buddha are to be accorded the honors of a *cakkavatti's* mortuary rites. Here we see that the analogy interestingly goes in the other direction, in that the *cakkavatti* becomes the point of reference for the treatment of the Buddha's corpse and the relics that it becomes after cremation. The asymmetry is again repeated in that it is the bodily remains that are treated with the honors of a *cakkavatti*, while the Buddha himself ascends into nirvana.

This gives us a lead into the understanding of the use of royal metaphors for characterizing the Buddha's doctrine, his influence, his relics, as they bear on this world (*lokiya*). The *dagabas* enshrining the relics became both "fields of merit" and the repositories of the Buddha's "power" of conquest; his relics (and other particles or objects representing him) be-

Buddhist Constitutional Concepts," pp. 161–165; Gokhale, "Early Buddhist Kingship"; Frank Reynolds, "The Two Wheels of Dhamma: A Study of Early Buddhism," in Bardwell L. Smith, ed., *The Two Wheels of Dhamma*, AAR Studies in Religion No. 3, American Academy of Religion, Penn., 1972; Trevor Ling, *The Buddha, Buddhist Civilization in India and Ceylon*, London, 1973.

[9] T. W. Rhys Davids (transl.), *Buddhist Suttas, The Sacred Books of the East*, Oxford, 1881, Vol. XI.

came indissolubly associated with kingship in Buddhist polities, acting as part of the royal regalia and serving as objects of the royal cult and as symbols of legitimate kingship. But these later elaborations have earlier precedents. "As the earlier community gradually developed and extended its formulations of the Dhamma, a number of royal symbols and traditions were incorporated and adapted to the new ethos . . . in their efforts to express the meaning of Dhamma, as in their attempts to convey the meaning of the person of the Founder, the early Buddhists turned to the symbolism of images of sovereignty" (Reynolds, in Bardwell Smith 1972, p. 17). Thus, for example, epithets for the dhamma are "ruler of rulers" in the *Anguttara Nikaya,* "highest in the world" in *Digha Nikaya;* and the later Sinhalese chronicle, *Mahavamsa,* in its first chapter dealing with the visit of the Buddha to Sri Lanka, calls him "the Conqueror" and "the Vanquisher."

Although the two great men show a parallelism and an exchange of characteristics in these examples, there is an asymmetry between their achievements that needs to be kept in view, for it ultimately generates certain basic tensions in the conduct of politics in Buddhist polities. The difference in their achievements is beautifully portrayed in the literary device that exploits in the *suttas* a symmetrical structure and the same or similar lexical items by putting different meanings into them.

> Monks, endowed in five ways a rajah, rolling the wheel (of state), rolls on the wheel by Dhamma, and that wheel may not be rolled back by the hand of any hostile son of man. In which five ways?
>
> Herein monks, the rajah, rolling the wheel of state, knows good, knows Dhamma; knows measure; knows times; and knows assembled men.
>
> Even so, monks, endowed in five ways, the Tathagata, arahant, fully enlightened, rolls on by Dhamma the unsurpassed Dhamma wheel; and that which may not be rolled back by recluse, godly man, deva, Mava, Brahma, or by any in the world. In which five ways?
>
> Herein monks, the Tathagata . . . knows good, knows Dhamma, knows measure, knows times, and knows assembled men (*The Book of Gradual Sayings,* Vol. III, pp. 113–114).

This passage not only relates the differential invincibility of the two, the *cakkavatti* against any son of man and the Buddha against humans, demons, and deities; it attributes to the *cakkavatti* one kind of wheel, the *anacakka,* and to the Buddha quite another, the *settha-cakka,* the best wheel; furthermore the good (*attha*) in the one case stands for "real," and, in the other for the "highest goal"; similarly the "measures" and "times" of the *cakkavatti* and the Buddha are different, both practicing different forms of sanctions and following different time schedules of court life and religious instruction.

Again, this simultaneously complementary and asymmetrical relationship between the Buddha and the *cakkavatti* can be seen in this famous passage, whose slight twist in the last line has not been usually noted:

Monks, these two persons born into the world are born to the profit and happiness of many, to the profit, happiness and welfare of many folk. What two?

A Tathagata, an Arahant who is a Fully Enlightened one, and a world-ruling monarch. These are the two so born.

Monks, these two persons born into the world are born as extraordinary men. What two? (As above).

Monks, these two are worthy of a relic-shrine. What two? (As above).

Monks, these two are enlightened. What two?

A Tathagata, an Arahant who is a Fully Enlightened One, and one enlightened for himself [i.e., a Pacceka Buddha who is not a world teacher] (*The Book of Gradual Sayings*, Vol. I, Ch. 6).[10]

We note that although they are both extraordinary great men, *mahapurusha*, yet enlightenment in the sense of the experience of deliverance is not the characteristic of a world ruler but of the seekers of the unconditional state.

At another place in the canonical texts (*The Book of Gradual Sayings*) the Buddha is reported as recounting his previous lives in the sphere of radiance, as Brahma, as Sakka, and "many times seven was I a wheel-turning rajah, just, righteous, conquering the four ends of the earth, bringing stability to the country, possessing the seven gems. Monks, these were my seven gems: the wheel-gem, elephant-gem, horse-gem, precious stone-gem, woman-gem, housefather-gem [also translated as banker] and minister gem. And I had more than a thousand sons, valiant, vigorous, crushers of enemy-hosts. And when I had conquered it, I dwelt within this sea-girt country (ruling), righteously, not needing rod or sword."[11]

Insofar as the *cakkavatti* status was an instance of the Buddha's several previous births, it was obviously inferior to Buddhahood. The most remarkable feature of this passage, however, is the Buddha's admission of his vigorous use of force as the world ruler, and of ruling righteously, not needing rod or sword, only after accomplishing the *conquest*. This passage from violence to righteousness is problematic for all actual rulers.

As a dialectic to this we can now introduce the famous canonical accounts of the *cakkavatti's* epic conquests, which are depicted in clearly cosmological terms and as a statement of ideal kingship and sovereignty that conquers without the use of force. (We are reminded here of Mus' words that "non-efficient causality" is prior to "efficient causality" in the Buddhist conception of the world.)

The process of the world ruler's universal conquests is described in two canonical extracts (*Digha Nikaya*, II and III), which deal with the *cakkavatti* Dalhanemi. In the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Suttanta* we are told that the wheel-turning emperor solemnly invokes the wheel to roll onward; the wheel rolls onward successively toward the East, the South, the North, and the West. And as the mighty monarch with his fourfold army appeared in each quarter following the wheel, the rival kings prostrated themselves in

[10] Woodward (transl.) p. 19. [11] Hare (transl.), Vol. IV, p. 54.

submission. The *cakkavatti* allowed them to retain their possessions on condition of their observance of the five moral precepts binding on the Buddhist layman.

In the second extract we are told that the celestial wheel is "no paternal heritage": When King Dalhanemi died, the wheel disappeared, and his oldest son won his own wheel only by proving himself to be a righteous king. (This lesson of course is in line with the precept that each man is responsible for his conduct, and his karmic actions bring forth their particular fruit.)

These accounts have several important implications: On the cosmological dimension I can do no better than quote Reynolds (1972) who takes his cue from Mus:

> The Cakkavatti is depicted as a cosmocrator whose conquest proceeded through the continents at each of the four cardinal points, and whose rule radiated out from a central position either identified or closely associated with the central cosmic mountain of the Indian tradition, Mount Meru. In the later texts this connection between the Cakkavatti and the cosmological pattern of the four directions and Mount Meru comes increasingly to the fore and it plays a dominant role in the architectural symbolism which developed in conjunction with Buddhist kingship (p. 20).

Or perhaps, to borrow certain expressions from Eliade, we can say that the conception of *cakkavatti* is meant to serve as an axis of orientation systematizing the acts of the experiential world, a corrective to relativity and confusion, a center in a timeless eternal context that makes the flux of daily profane existence more comprehensible.

On the political dimension the account of the ideal mode of conquest and pacification of the conquered proposes certain standards of conduct that both inspire and cause despair in actual kings. We have cited previously the Buddha's admission that he had, as a previous *cakkavatti*, used force; but here in the later cosmological account, the wheel of righteousness conquers more effectively than the scepter of *danda*. One cannot help but wonder whether this account of the rolling celestial wheel is not meant to be at least partly an ironical commentary and a parody of the mode of warfare by force and bloodshed and stratagem practiced by the kings of that time and deliberately elaborated and amplified by the arthashastric writers.

As a model of conduct for historical Buddhist kings it is the policy of pacification after conquest that has been of greater relevance. The *cakkavatti* in effect grants back their domains to the subdued kings when they submit to the basic five moral precepts of Buddhism. We thus see the king represented as the propagator of the Buddhist precepts and as the overseer and guardian of the morals of his subdued tributaries. Indeed, in a sense the king *must* let conquered rulers keep their thrones, since only as a king of kings is he a world monarch. We cannot emphasize strongly enough how important in the actual history of Southeast Asian polities has been

this pattern of over-rule and conversion to the dhamma of the conquered rulers or subjected peoples. This conversion is coextensive with the process of political expansion by monarchs or of political unification, which is more an embracing of diversity around a center than a centralization of power itself. This pacification model – which we find reflected in the *cakkavatti* cycle – was first seriously proclaimed and exploited by Emperor Asoka, who in turn was the model for many other Southeast Asian Buddhist monarchs.

It may well be true that the Buddhist lay ethic as propounded in the canon is, to use Weber's words (1967), "weak" and "colourless"; yet Weber never grasped the possibility that the social ethic may have been propounded in early Buddhism as part and parcel, and as a concomitant, of the ethic of *cakkavatti* and the righteous ruler, *dhammaraja*. Indeed, one of Weber's starting points was that ancient Buddhism was "a specifically unpolitical and anti-political status religion" and that "secular authorities could in no way find cause against [such] an absolutely unpolitical movement"; he not only declared categorically that ancient Buddhism had no "inner relation to [the] political" but also located the first and basic political transformation in Buddhism in the time of Asoka, when "the beginnings of a political theory emerge" in the form of the *cakkavatti* doctrine supplementing the spiritual power of the Buddha. "With this pacifistic-religious turn from the traditional kingly *dharma* came, as could not be otherwise, the development toward a patriarchal ethical and charitable ideal of a welfare state" (pp. 206–207, 237–238).

Both of these Weberian propositions need to be corrected. First let us take the assertion that ancient Buddhism had no political connections or interests. Weber goes on to comment in its support: "For the rest the rule of Buddha, whom the tradition considered as a protege of King Bimbisara, who adored him is to avoid all suspicion of worldly power: soldiers and slaves, indebted bondsmen and criminals found no sort of reception in the order" (p. 227).[12]

In fact the evidence can be read differently: The Buddha's good relationship with his benefactors, particularly the kings of Magadha and Kosala, is evidence of his acceptance of monarchical government as a proper mode of sociopolitical organization and his adapting the code of discipline (*vinaya*) to conform to the interest of the rulers (as, for example, witnessed by the categories of persons excluded from ordination: persons in royal service, slaves, debtors, and criminals). "Buddha had a great respect for social customs and traditions and, on that account, he was always ready to modify and formulate his rulings in accordance with them, if possible. He wanted a healthy relation between society and his Order." In support of this statement Misra (1972) cites the Buddha's requirement of the prior permission of parents before becoming a monk and his meticulous concern

[12] "Men in royal service" (*rajabhato*) is a better translation than "soldiers" (S. J. T.).

for the decency of behavior of monks in regard to lay society (p. 129).[13]

Our thesis will be strengthened by a brief look at the political landscape around the time of the Buddha and before King Asoka, a period described as "the age of the Vinaya." The powerful rulers of the Buddha's time were those of Magadha, Kosala, Kosambi, Ujjeni; these monarchical entities were alleged to be expanding their boundaries, particularly at the cost of the so-called republican polities, for example, those under the dominion of the tribes and clans such as the Licchavis, Sakyas, Mallas, Bhaggas. While these latter were the losers in the long run, their republicanism turns out to be rule by leading families who bore the title of "raja," or "by the elders of the ruling clan called *mahallakas* in the Pali texts" (Misra 1972, p. 209). And their political units were called sangha or *gana*, in which the pre-eminent positions were held by the aforementioned ruling families.[14]

These data suggest two inferences. Although the words such as "sangha" and *gana* were probably borrowed from these so-called republican tribal polities, the actual internal ordering of the sangha of early Buddhism was unlike that of these polities, which are better described as segmentary states with ranked lineages rather than as democratic and republican in Western terms. (Thus the Buddha's alleged recommendation of the Vajjian model for sangha organization should be given a careful exegesis.) Secondly, the so-called monarchical kingdoms in turn should not be conceived as centralized monolithic systems but as conforming to a mandala-type constellation pattern of center and satellites, which would thus bring their constitution closer to that of the so-called tribal confederacies. We shall take up this question again when we discuss the Asokan empire later.

Next let us marshal more evidence in addition to that already presented, contra Weber, for our view that early Buddhist literature, much of it anterior to Asoka, had already begun the enterprise of developing an integral inner relation to the political, via the doctrine of righteous kingship. If one were to adopt a mere quantitative criterion, then one is impressed by the number of instances in the Pali canon and in noncanonical literature, such as the *Jatakas*, that address themselves to the subject of kingship. Indeed, the ethic of righteous rule recounted in varying ways is the place to look for a Buddhist view of the recommended society rather than the admonitions directly addressed to the layman and householder.

The *Jatakas* contain pithy aphorisms on kingship: "A woman without a husband, a river run dry and a realm (*rattha*) without a king are naked"; "Just as the tree is the refuge of birds, so is the king the refuge of his

[13] Of course this does not contradict the Buddha's warning that excessive relationships with householders would make the monks liable to *tajjaniya-kamma*.

[14] For example, Misra says that "all the leading members of the Licchavi republic were called 'raja.' . . . Besides the 'rajas' there were Uparajas, Senapatis, and Bhandagarikas" (p. 209). The *Vinaya* refers to the *parisa* of the Licchavis as being made up of the representative heads of the *gana*; there is also evidence of the *gana* having a judicial system administered by a hierarchy of officials (p. 210).

people" (*Jataka* 432). And in another celebrated *Jataka* (334) the king is likened to the bull of the herd:

> The bull through floods a devious course will take,
> The herd of kine all straggling in his wake.

Just as in the *Agganna Suttanta* kingship was conceived as the corrective for disorder in human affairs, so too in the animal kingdom the *Jatakas* postulate kingship as a natural institution: When once upon a time in the first cycle of the world the people gathered together and "took for their king a certain man, handsome, suspicious, commanding, altogether perfect, the quadrupeds also gathered, and chose for king the Lion"; and "the fish in the ocean chose them a fish called Ananda"; and the birds in the Himalayas, after initially choosing the owl, to whom however the crow objected violently, subsequently chose the wild goose for king. The goose was the *bodhisatta* himself (*Jataka* 270).[15] Animal kings portray righteous conduct that is worthy of emulation by humans: Thus another celebrated *Jataka* (407) relates the heroic and compassionate act of a monkey king who allowed his troop to walk over his body and escape to safety from the archers of King Brahmadatta; King Brahmadatta, moved by the monkey's conduct, gave him a royal burial and raised a shrine over his skull relic.[16] The monkey king was the *bodhisatta* himself.

Furthermore, there are many instances when dialogues between wise and virtuous animals and birds are used as occasions for affirming virtuous kingship. In *Jataka* 534, for example, in a dialogue between a wise swan and a king, the king affirms that he observes the ten *rajadhammas* of liberality, good conduct, nonattachment, straightforwardness, mildness, austerity, suppression of anger, noninjury, patience, and forbearance. Similar sentiments are stated in the *Digha Nikaya* (II, p. 186): The ideal king should cleanse his mind of all traces of avarice (*lobha*), ill will (*dosa*), intellectual error (*moha*), and strive to cultivate the virtue of noninjury (*avihimsa*), to rule without the aid of force (*danda*) and weapons of destruction (*sattha*).[17]

The appreciation of this appropriately leads us to the issue of lay morality as propounded in the canonical literature. Weber's judgment of the Buddhist ethic for the laity as being a "colourless" bourgeois ethic essentially related to the following sum of prescriptions and exhortations made to the laymen: to follow the five precepts (and on special days to extend the precepts observed to eight or ten); to avoid the practice of five occupations (trade in weapons, spirits, human beings, flesh, and poisons), to cultivate the virtues of charity, nonviolence, compassion, and forbear-

[15] See also *Jatakas* 32 and 537 as further examples of kingship in the animal kingdom.

[16] See also *Jataka* 501, which tells the story of a deer; it ends with the master's exhortation: "To friends and courtiers warrior king do righteously; and so,/By following a righteous life to heaven the king shall go. . . ."

[17] Cited by Gokhale, 1953, p. 165.

ance, to earn wealth by moral means, to listen to sermons, and, finally, to support generously the order of monks and nuns through donation (*dana*). This last, phrased in terms of the feeding of monks and nuns, and building and maintaining monasteries and residences for them, was given a prominent emphasis in the admonitions to laymen.[18]

The *Sigalovada Suttanta,* which Buddhagosa rendered as *The* Vinaya *of the Houseman,* is alleged to be Buddha's explicit statement on the whole domestic duty of the Buddhist layman. In this homily the Buddha gives Sigala many admonitions on how to avoid six channels of dissipating wealth and how to protect the six quarters: parents as the east, teachers as the south, wife and children as the west, friends and companions as the north, servants and workpeople as the nadir, religious teachers and brahmans as the zenith. Despite the fact that the *sutta* is well known, it is well worth citing fragments, if only because we shall recognize the same sentiments and admonitions being repeated in Asoka's stirring inscriptions.

Not only the *Jataka* stories but the canonical literature itself is eloquent about the "multiplier effect," to borrow a Keynesian concept, of kingship on the conduct of the rest of human society and indeed on the cosmos itself, since human and natural orders affect each other, bound as they are by the same cosmic law:

> But monks, when rajahs are righteous, the ministers of rajah also are righteous. When ministers are righteous, brahmins and householders also are righteous. Thus townsfolk and villagers are righteous. This being so, moon and sun go right in their courses. This being so, constellations and stars do likewise; days and nights, months and fortnights, seasons and years go on their courses regularly; winds blow regularly and in due season. Thus the devas are not annoyed and the sky-deva bestows sufficient rain. Rains falling seasonably, the crops ripen in due season. Monks, when crops ripen in due season, men who live on crops are long-lived, well-favoured, strong and free from sickness (*The Book of Gradual Sayings* 1933, Vol. II, X (70), p. 85).

The multiplier effect works also cumulatively in regressive fashion to reach the pit of depression as is expounded with shattering logic by *Cakkavatti Sihanada Suttanta* in respect of a king who is described as governing badly for lack of seeking advice on "the Aryan Duty of a Sovran war-lord." This passage is noted for the early Buddhists' robust appreciation of the effect of economic deprivation and unjust distribution of wealth on the state of society:

> "Thus, brethren, from goods not being bestowed on the destitute poverty grew rife; from poverty growing rife stealing increased, from the spread of stealing violence grew apace, from the growth of violence the destruction of life became common, from the frequency of murder both the span of life in those beings and their comeliness also wasted away, so that, of humans whose span of life was eighty thousand years, the sons lived but forty thousand years" (*Dialogues of the Buddha,* Part III, 1921, p. 67).

[18] See Tambiah 1970, p. 92 f., for a fuller discussion.

And in the style of progressive degradation propounded in the cosmic myth of genesis, here too the span of human life diminishes to 100 years (and is further predicted as diminishing to 10 years in the future) as man's crimes of lying, speaking evil, committing adultery, wanton greed and lust, and lack of filial piety and piety toward holy men increase.[19]

The logic of the multiplier effect is such that when kings prove unworthy, they could rightly be unseated. Thus in *Jataka* 432 when a king who has played the part of a thief in order to test the powers of a youth (the *bodhisattva* himself) who claims the ability to track down thieves is exposed, his subjects club him to death, saying: ". . . that he may not in future go on playing the part of a thief, we will kill this wicked king."

Thus in the early Buddhist literature the discussion of kingship spans a spectrum extending from the righteous rule of the *cakkavatti* and *dhammaraja,* whose conduct constitute the norm for society and give it shape, to foolish and wicked kings, whose displacement and even murder are an inexorable and unavoidable fruit of their wrong conduct. We should not forget this range of evaluations when we consider the variability in the conduct of kings and in the stability of their rule in respect of the historical monarchs of Southeast Asian kingdoms.

I have presented the Buddhist conception of kingship in its own terms as a cultural account. Let me now distance myself and ask one critical pragmatic question concerning this discussion of the ethic of the righteous king. To what extent did the early literature attempt to propound rules of statecraft and effective kingship that go beyond the exhortations to ideal conduct to a more practical realm of strategies and instructions? In Hindu literature we saw how the pragmatically oriented arthashastric manuals differentiated out from the dharmashastric genre, which claimed ethical superiority. Did a similar development take place in the field of Buddhist thought? Are there manuals for statecraft addressed to Buddhist kings?

It would appear that although in early Buddhist literature certain ideas relating to the constituents of sovereignty, which were conspicuously treated in Kautilya's *Arthashastra,* did make their appearance, they cannot be seen as constituting a full-blown account. Kautilya's elements (*prakriti*) of sovereignty were, to repeat the earlier enumeration, the king, the minister, the country, the fort, the treasury, the army, the permanent ally (and also the permanent enemy). The seven jewels of the *cakkavatti* do not quite match these from a practical viewpoint; but other canonical and noncanonical discussions suggest a Buddhist realism. I rely here on Gokhale, who says that there are frequent canonical references to two possessions as constituting the basis of the king's power – a full treasury

[19] *Jataka* 194 reports these as words said by Sakka when he installed the *bodhisatta* as king after slaying the evil King Brahmadatta, king of Benares: "This your righteous king from this time forth shall rule in righteousness. If a king be unrighteous, God sends rain out of season, and in season he sends no rain: and fear of famine, fear of pestilence, fear of the sword – these three fears come upon men from him."

and a large, strong, well-equipped army.[20] "These two are naturally related to control over territory, the concrete basis of sovereignty. The territory of a state is variously stated as comprising the capital (*rajadhani*), towns (*nigama*), villages (*gama*), countryside (*janapada*) and border areas (*paccanta*). Over all these the king had control and the right to tax the people resident therein. It was this wealth that enabled a king to maintain his armed forces. . . ."

The *Tesakuna Jataka* contains some very interesting material on early Buddhist political ideas, among which is the concept of the five powers (*balani*) that are the basis of kingship. These five powers are described "as strength of arms (*bahabalam*), strength of wealth (*bhogabalam*), strength of ministers (*amaccabalam*), prestige of high birth (*abhijaccabalam*) and strength of intellect (*pannabalam*), the last being the greatest of royal strengths" (Gokhale 1966, p. 17).

Notwithstanding these references, which remind us of the Kautilyan enumerations, we can justifiably assert that the early Buddhist literature on kingship presents us with a paradox and with an enterprise curiously incomplete. On the one hand the Buddhist theory, in the matter of claims it made on behalf of monarchy, went far beyond what the brahmanical theorists allowed. In the dharmashastric conception the duty of the king, *rajadharma,* was located within the varna scheme in which the brahmans as interpreters and exponents of morality legitimated and supported the king as wielder of force (*danda*). Thus was *artha* (political economy) made dependent on dharma (morality), and perhaps thereby not allowing a full-blown monarchical system to emerge. The brahman and the *kshatriya* ruler are both preeminently in this world, both are necessary for the maintenance of the world, and among the pair the brahman as sacrificer, teacher, and interpreter of the Vedas and morality is superior. The Buddhist scheme by contrast in stating that the universal cosmic law (dhamma) is the root and fountainhead of kingship, raised up the magnificent *cakkavatti* world ruler as the sovereign regulator and the ground of society. By virtue of this grand imperial conception the way was made open for Buddhist monarchs actually to found "world empires" on a scale hitherto unknown in India or, in face of an inability to found them for logistical reasons, at least to stake imperial claims. The rhetoric of kingship reached a high point in the Buddhist kingdoms.

But the paradox is that it is within the brahmanical regime of thought that a school of *artha* emerged and attempted to investigate and systematize the foundations of political economy and statecraft and to prescribe for the achievement of their objectives. The Buddhist writers did not produce this kind of differentiated "science" of administration.[21] Thus this

[20] Gokhale, "Early Buddhist Kingship" (p. 17), cites the *Samyutta Nikaya,* I, and *Anguttara Nikaya,* V.

[21] Bechert (1970, p. 766) makes the observation, which supports our argument, that "Kautalya's book was read and used for the instruction of princes in Ceylon and

curious asymmetry forces upon us the reflection whether the grandly conceived virtue-endowed rulers may not, for lack of pragmatic rules and constraints relating to the conduct of *artha*, either turn themselves into "absolute" monarchs practicing a degree of both liberality and tyranny unknown in India or suffer from the shifting sands of instability and disorder in their domestic and external relations. We invite the reader to exercise his or her speculative judgment on this matter by consulting the chronicles of the deeds of Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, and Khmer kings.

This same paradox will exercise us when we try to outline the features of that king of *cakkavatti* proportions – Asoka. He will be our center of interest in the next chapter. But before we deal with him, let me make a last point germane to the same paradox and central to another subsequent chapter. We shall find that in the grandiosely conceived palaces and capitals of Southeast Asian Buddhist monarchs brahmans and not Buddhist monks served as court functionaries, as royal diviners and astrologers, as scribes and judges and interpreters of law (which owes its name in Burma and Thailand ultimately to the concept dharmashastra). Thus in these polities we shall see the ideology of kingship reach new heights when the Buddhist and brahmanical notions of *dhammaraja* and *devaraja* meet and when the pragmatics of brahmanical statecraft are poured into the Buddhist mold of righteous kingship. There is of course no contradiction confronted by the encompassing Buddhist view of kingship that brahmans should serve *under* the king, in the cause of implementation of dharma under the king's aegis.

Burma." Kautalya's work is mentioned (under a misspelled title) in the famous Pagan inscription of 1442.

5. Asoka Maurya: The Paradigm

Scholars have found themselves at variance in their interpretations of the nature of the Buddhist content of Asokan political and religious policy. On the one hand there is the highly idealized and embellished partisan view stated in the Buddhist chronicles and legends that Asoka was the great *dhammika dhammaraja,* the builder of grand architectural monuments all over India, the great patron of Buddhism, its defender as, for instance, described in the story of the Third Council and the expulsion of 80,000 heretics under the direction of the great monk-elder, Mogaliputta Tissa, and its propagator, as eulogized in the legend of the nine missions sent to spread the message of Buddhism, six within his vast kingdom and three to Ceylon, the "Yona" country (perhaps Bactria) and Suvarna-bhumi (in popular tradition located in the Burma-Siam region).

Certain scholars (e.g., Dutt 1962 and Thapar 1961) have insisted that the Buddhist protagonist "mythologization" of Asoka as the Buddhist emperor, based on the legends and accounts fathered by the monks (as, for example, the Sinhalese chronicles), should be kept separate from the historian's assessment of the evidence based on the inscriptions and archaeological finds.

Unfortunately, the evidence on which to base an objective history of the Asokan era is none too plentiful. The position that we take is twofold:

1. Insofar as the Theravada literature, especially the chronicles and legends, have provided the model of kingship for the kings of Theravada polities, a model both generating and legitimating political action, such a model becomes a part of history and must be seriously taken into account.

2. Insofar as certain historians have taken the view that the Asokan policy of dharma is not strictly Buddhist though informed by Buddhism, we reply that it is a misguided criterion to apply to a Buddhist conception of ideal kingship that it mouth and preach the *Buddha vacana* (the sayings of the Buddha) as such. The dharma of a king does not require him to show the way to nirvana but to act, just as a canopy gives shade, as the provider of the general conditions of a prosperous and virtuous society in which the sangha and its dhamma (in the stricter sense) may flourish. We shall try and substantiate these two propositions.

The reign of the great Indian emperor Asoka ran from about 274–232 B.C. He was the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Mauryan dynasty and the alleged employer of Kautilya. If we accept the year of his birth as 304 B.C., then Asoka's accession to the throne took place when he was about 30 and his coronation when he was 34 (270 B.C.). The great turning point in his life – one is tempted to call it, after Erikson, his identity crisis and his passage from violence to dharma – is supposed to have taken place at the conclusion of the Kalinga war (262 B.C.), 8 years after his coronation when he was 42 years old. Thus the crisis and change of heart are those of a mature man and not one at the threshold of his adulthood.

It is believed that he was already converted to Buddhism before this war but that his devotion to Buddhism intensified and his espousal of the doctrine of dharma began soon after the end of the war. The first edicts on dharma were proclaimed and the first dharma tours began in 260 B.C.

The Kalinga War

The Kalinga war is alleged to be his only military campaign, and a brief one at that, in which he conquered a neighboring people. This successful campaign, however, enabled him to make complete the vast imperial domain he inherited, stretching from Gandhara in the northwest to the Himalayan frontier and from there to the south, stopping short at the Chola and Pandyan country.

In the Rock Edict XIII[1] the emperor states that "the Beloved of the Gods, conqueror of the Kalingas, is moved to remorse now" because the conquest of a people "involves slaughter, death, and deportation" [2] and, more importantly, because persons such as *brahmanas* and *sramanas* (who are of priestly and ascetic orders), followers of other religions, and householders who practiced virtuous conduct, all suffer from the injury "inflicted on their loved ones." In effect we are told that the practice of violence and force not only harms the victims but raises the vexed "theodicy" problem of the unmerited suffering of the virtuous.

There is no doubt that Asoka's renunciation of force, his espousal of *ahimsa*, and his advocacy of moral conquest (*dharma-vijaya*) as the only true conquest must at one level be read for what it patently was – the experiencing of a moral revolution and its eloquent advocacy in a domain of life traditionally characterized by the use of force. But I believe that we should not stop there; we should also try to probe the complex ramifications of Asoka's policy at another level; that is, we should read between

[1] All citations to the Asokan inscriptions are taken from N. A. Nikam and Richard McKeon, *The Edicts of Asoka*, The University of Chicago Press, 1959.

[2] The edict refers to 150,000 persons being carried away captive, 100,000 being slain and "many times that number" dead.

the lines. Especially since we have precious little evidence of Asoka's reign other than the homiletics of his inscriptions, it is necessary to squeeze from them the maximum meaning possible.

Thus reading the inscription relating to the Kalinga war for its hidden aspects – and in doing so let us keep in mind that he was now a mature king in his forties and had made the last territorial conquest necessary to make his vast empire complete[3] – we can say that the passage from violence to the rule of dharma served as an efficacious ideology of pacification, political stability, and security. It is not that these considerations were merely a functional consequence of the dharma policy; they are possibly an aspect of its *motivation* as well.

In this context we should note that Asoka's "change of heart" followed a model already contained in the early Buddhist literature: We have already referred to the Buddha's recounting a past life as a *cakkavatti* who, after conquering this "sea-girt country" with his valiant crushers of enemy hosts, ruled "righteously, not needing rod and sword." That Asoka waged a struggle for the throne with other prince-claimants and emerged victorious is clear (Thapar 1961). There are certain traditions that portray Asoka as the "black" wicked prince who waded through blood to ascend the throne. Thus the *Mahavamsa* (V. 18–20) says of this illustrious hero: "A hundred glorious sons and one had Bindusara; Asoka stood high above them all in valour, splendour, might and wondrous powers. He, when he had slain his ninety-nine brothers born of different mothers, won undivided sovereignty over all Jambudipa." Thus the need to kill before becoming a great king who can then rule righteously is a Buddhist root dilemma, to which Asoka is the first Buddhist king to give a historical incarnation, to be followed by other rulers, Sinhalese, Siamese, and Burmese.

But returning to our theme that the Rock Edict XIII is simultaneously a proclamation of moral revolution and pacification policy, we can perhaps see evidence of it in the veiled threat to the "forest peoples" who had come under his dominion (i.e., the "primitive tribes" in the remote sections of the conquered territory) if they did not adopt his new way of life – "he reminds them, however, that he exercises the power to punish, despite his repentance." Also in the quite differently worded boast he says he has achieved the moral conquest of people living beyond his kingdom, even as far as where the kings of Syria, Egypt, and Macedonia ruled, a boast that may also have carried the message to his neighbors that they should not fear expansionist wars on his side and correspondingly should eschew violence themselves. Unlike conquest by force, conquest by dharma generates no opposition of conquered and conqueror.

[3] Thapar (1961) appropriately comments that "with the conquest of Kalinga the consolidation of the empire was complete" and that "there was now no opposing power within the empire" (p. 168). Whereas the south could be left alone, the conquest of Kalinga was of importance "both to the strategy and the economy of the Mauryan empire" because it stood in the way of the southern routes from the Ganges Valley, and also because it comprised a powerful maritime area.

The Asokan Dharma

We should now try to grasp what the Asokan dharma entailed. Two translators into English of Asoka's edicts strive to convey the dimensions of the idea of dharma in these terms: "Dharma provides a code of personal conduct, a bond of human relations and political justice, and a principle of international relations, and Dharma turns the lives of men away from evil deeds, mutual intolerance, and armed conflict. . . . the whole political organization was made subsidiary to moral law in a concrete translation of the law into specific forms of human and social relations" (Nikam and McKeon 1959, pp. 19, 21). Perhaps, we can more pointedly characterize the Asokan ideology as asserting in terms of our previous examination of Buddhist-versus-brahmanical ideas (both dharmashastric and arthashastric) that Asoka's program represents kingship and polity as the agents for inculcating and implementing in human affairs the universal morality and righteousness of dharma.

Gokhale (1966) makes this comparison between the Kautilyan and Asokan formulations of the practice of statecraft:

> Asoka's approach to statecraft was based on the primacy of *dharma* over *danda,* and in this he specifically seems to adopt the Buddhist philosophy of the state. . . . His ideal was the Righteous Ruler (*dhammiko dhammaraja*) of the Buddhist works. The ideal Buddhist king rules without the use of *danda,* or force, and in his hands the state ceases to be an instrument designed to uphold the order of the castes and sacerdotal privileges. . . . A statecraft based on the normal use of force, as envisaged by Kautalya, is generally different from the administrative philosophy of Asoka which is based on the assumption that human nature is basically good . . . (pp. 90–91).

Let us provisionally accept this formulation although later we shall revise Gokale's ardent advocacy by examining the other side of the coin.

Asoka's linguistic innovation in propounding the ethic of dharma is noteworthy. The following are examples of the expressions either newly coined and/or publicized: *dharma-vijaya* (conquest by dharma), *dharma-rati* (pleasure in dharma), *dharma-dana* (gift of dharma), *dharma-mangala* (ceremony of mangala), *dharma-sambandha* (kingship based in morality), *dharma-samstava* (acquaintance with men grounded in morality). The distinctive linguistic mark of Asoka's morality "becomes apparent in the combination of the word 'Dharma' with another word signifying an activity or an attitude which defines Dharma as applied to act or motive and which is itself transformed in that definition" (Nikam and McKeon 1959, p. xiii). Thus conventional practices and relations are transformed by association with a moral ideal.

The Buddhist inspiration for Asoka's ambitious all-embracing conception of benevolent kingship is no more a controversial fact. It is true that what he sought to advance was not adherence to the doctrinaire

tenets of a chosen creed but the practice of dharma in a larger sense that had resonances both in Buddhist and brahmanical ethics. It is also true that the word "nirvana" not once appeared in his inscriptions and that his declared aims in practicing dharma on behalf of himself and his subjects were "Happiness, either in this world or in the next" (Pillar Edict I), the production of merit in this world and to an unlimited degree in the next world (Rock Edict IX), the gaining of heaven (Kalinga Edict I). (As the goals of householders, these objectives are not necessarily unorthodox for early Buddhism and in our time as well.)

But the Buddhist aura is unmistakable when one considers not only the substance but the linguistic phrasing of several edicts that inveigh against the slaughter of animals (Rock Edict I), advocate the "grant of life to living creatures, two-footed and four-footed as well as birds and animals" (Pillar Edict II)[4] and the application of the "middle path" in the administration of justice, show concern for persons who suffer imprisonment and torture (Kalinga Edict I), and propagate the creed that "Impartiality is desirable in legal procedures and in punishments" (Pillar Edict IV) – a norm that stands in startling contrast to the notion of graduated punishment and graduated legal privileges according to varna status "in the direct order of castes" propounded in the Code of Manu.[5] We could add many more examples that bear the mark of Buddhist orientations: the religious toleration of all sects (Rock Edicts VII and XII), the dharma tours of the country by the king, the appointment of morality officers, the visit to the Buddha's birthplace (Rummindei Pillar Edict) and place of enlightenment (Rock Edict VIII), the special edict conveying greetings to the sangha and recommending to them certain dhamma texts (Bhabra Rock Edict), the greater importance of meditation compared with moral prescriptions, by which "the people can be induced to advance in Dharma" (Pillar Edict VII), and the institution of welfare services (Pillar Edict VII). This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it constitutes a sufficient basis for the plausible claim that the edicts are an outcome of the Buddhist stress on *metta* (loving kindness), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), *karuna* (compassion), charity and donorship (*dana*), and so on, as the supreme virtues of conduct of all beings (including the seeker of nirvana who engages in detached action without interest in the fruits of action).

We are unable therefore to agree with this distinguished scholar's assessment of the Buddhist influence on Asoka's reign. Sukumar Dutt (1962) opines: "From all his edicts discovered so far the figure of Emperor Asoka

[4] In this and certain other matters one cannot of course rule out Jain influence as well as the influence of other similar heterodox sects.

[5] In this connection we should however note that although Asoka showed compassion to prisoners and boasted that "during the twenty-six years since my coronation, I have ordered the release of prisoners twenty-five times" (Pillar Edict V), he did not stretch *ahimsa* to the extent of abolishing capital punishment; he merely gave a respite of three days to those who had been sentenced to death (Pillar Edict IV).

as an enthusiast and propagandist for Buddhism scarcely emerges. All that appears is – that the emperor was a Buddhist himself; that he had some personal contacts with the monk-community and visited at least one of its centres (Magadha)"; and that, in his capacity as a ruler whose constitutional duty obliged him to see that corporate bodies like Buddhist *sanghas* did not suffer through internal dissensions, he revived and proclaimed the Vinaya rule of "unfrocking" and expelling schism mongers (p. 10).

Dutt seems to feel that the edicts "show decidedly greater concern on the emperor's part with the Dhamma of his own conception than with the Dhamma founded by the Buddha and postulated by monks in scripture" (p. 112). In our view, however, Dutt's yardstick for measuring Asokan dharma is inappropriate when he uses the specific values of canonical nibbanic Buddhism as providing the standards for evaluating its character. Such a phrasing of the question is misplaced. In fact Dutt grants that which we want to establish – that Asoka's edicts had "so imbibed the inner spirit of Buddhism – its charity and human-heartedness, its sensitiveness to suffering, whether of men and of animals, its message of peace and goodwill to all – that it breathes ineffably through the phrasology of his multi-purpose edicts" (p. 110).[6] He also concedes that the emperor took some of his cues from the Buddhist scriptures: Thus apart from that edict specifically addressed to monks that enumerates certain scriptural texts, there are other edicts that show unmistakable traces of the *dhammapada*, and of the discussions relating to the *cakkavatti* in the *Anguttara Nikaya*.

While appreciative of much in Thapar (1961), we are unable to agree with the overdetermined manner in which she wishes to separate Asoka's personal faith as a Buddhist from his public official policy of dhamma, when there is no evidence at all in the inscriptions that such a separation can be made. Thus in contrast to his major Rock Edicts, which are alleged to be concerned with dhamma, Asoka's minor Pillar Edicts are described as "a second category of edicts, i.e., those that were associated with his purely Buddhist activities. . . ." Similarly, of the four edicts that concern themselves with the Buddhist sangha (which Thapar identifies as the Rummindei Inscription, the Nigalisagar Inscription, and the Schism Edict) and with Buddhist teachings (the Bhabra Edict), she makes the entirely unsupportable assertion: "Here Asoka is expressing himself, not as a Mauryan emperor, but entirely as a private individual" (p. 179).

What is not at issue is that Asoka's dhamma is a general ethic and policy of his own creation that is not narrowly concerned with the propagation of Buddhist teachings and prescriptions as such. What is misplaced is the argument that if the policy was inspired by Buddhism, then the edicts should be concerned with "preaching Buddhism" or with "re-

[6] In another place Dutt says that Asoka's dharma shows "the culture of fundamental social and ethical virtues" tinged by the emperor's Buddhist faith.

cording of Buddhist principles." The case for Asokan kingship being a Buddhist transformational phenomenon rests on the larger consideration of its difference from the traditional view of kingship and polity.

Thus our argument is not so much that the inscriptions show Asoka to be a propagandist for Buddhism expounding its tenets and deliverance quest (this is the business of the *bhikkhu*) but that his conception of benevolent kingship and the exercise of political authority are in particular inspired by Buddhist ideas and values, though there are of course certain similar resonances in the teachings of other heterodox sects of the time and in some of the dharmashastric texts as well. It is entirely mistaken to measure Asoka's dharma against the monk-renouncer's regimen and aim of nibbanic liberation and inevitably to find the former wanting. We can see the picture in proper perspective only if we begin with the larger conception of the Asoka-type kingship as the embodiment of a sociopolitical morality, as the upholder and implementer of dharma order, and then locate within it the more specialized quest of the renouncer, whose vocation is possible only because a wider morally concerned and prosperous society exists. In other words, it is within the larger universe of king and subjects that we should place the *bhikkhu*'s regimen and salvation quest as the specially valued and exclusive pursuit of the religious elite – with the layman's duty to support it but not to imitate its stringent life.

Asoka's dharma was conceived in a grand embracing manner, in the manner of the *cakkavatti*. As Paul Masson-Oursel (1934) put it: ". . . the determination to establish a universal order, regulated in its smallest details, for the safeguarding of all interests for which the king assumes the responsibility is the purpose of a 'king of kings'" (p. 38). Dharma is "moral, religious and civil law all in one" and "legislation even if it comes from the king, is not regarded as 'secular' . . . for the spiritual and the temporal, whch are divided between two castes, Brahmans and Kshatriyas, are not distinguished in the office of the sovereign" (p. 39). "So, when he [Asoka] preaches, with his royal authority, what is ordered by the various religions in common, the king is doing the same organizing work as when he provides for the well-being of his peoples. This policy is expressed in the formula, 'Dharma aims at the happiness of all creatures'" (p. 39).

From a wide spectrum of the Asokan dharmic concerns adverted to in the inscriptions a few will now be chosen for closer attention. Perhaps the most frequently expressed theme in the inscriptions is Asoka's exhortation to the ordinary man to observe certain norms of interpersonal conduct. Rock Edict XI serves as an illuminating example:

> There is no gift that can equal the gift of Dharma, the establishment of human relations in Dharma, the distribution of wealth through Dharma, or kinship in Dharma.
>
> That gift consists in proper treatment of slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, priests and ascetics, and abstention from the slaughter of animals. . . .

This *dharma-dana* or *dharma-mangala* is advocated with slight variations [7] in at least five others (Brahmagiri Rock Edict II, Rock Edict III, Rock Edict IV, Rock Edict IX, Rock Edict XIII). It seems to me that commentators (e.g., Thapar) have not drawn our attention to the fact that these edicts echo the sentiments expressed in the famous dialogue of the Buddha called the *Sigalovada Sutta*, the homily that enumerates the comprehensive duties of the householder in respect of six sets of relations between parent and child, pupils and teacher, husband and wife, friends, master and servant, householder and monk. Now it is remarkable that in these edicts it is the king who has wrapped around himself the mantle of teacher, exhorter, guardian, and executor of the layman's morality. In other words, the conclusion is inevitable that the dharma of the lay householder is made a part or an aspect of the dharma of the polity as implemented by the king.

A gloss is also relevant with respect to the good works proclaimed in the famous Pillar Edict VII:

> King Devanampiya Piyadasi says thus: On the highways Banyan trees have been planted so that they may afford shade to man and animals; mango-groves have been planted; wells have been dug at an interval of every half a *kos*; resting places have been set up; watering places have been established for the benefit of animals and men. But the joy thereof has been slight indeed. In many ways kings in the past as well as I have attempted to comfort the world. I have done this in the desire that they may practice morality.[8]

Sarkisyanz (1965) probably went too far in taking these (and other) acts – which remind us of the charitable acts of the *cakkavatti* in the canonical literature[9] – as signifying a "Buddhist welfare state," a characterization that impelled Mus to comment that while Asoka's charities and foundations could be labeled "public welfare services," "they by no means combine, so happily with the Welfare State program, properly so called" in orthodox Socialist or Marxian terms (p. xvi).

Sarkisyanz makes two important observations concerning Asoka's initiation of an "ethical and social tradition of public welfare services" which help us to appreciate the scope and contours of the emperor's ideology:

1. "The Dhamma duties and pieties, as proclaimed by Ashoka, do not mention duties of man to the authority of the State, only the obligation this emperor felt toward his subjects, toward all man and indeed all be-

[7] A variant expressed in Rock Edict III runs as follows: "Obedience to mother and father, liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, priests and ascetics; abstention from killing creatures; and moderation in spending and acquiring possessions are all meritorious."

[8] This translation is taken from Gokhale, 1966.

[9] Let us also not forget that these acts of welfare and charity are part of the dharmashastric recommendations under the aspect of *kshemakrit*. Moreover, they occur in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (see my quotation on p. 31). After all, the brahmans and the Buddhists shared the discourse on dharma – it is their emphases and ordering of tenets that make them different.

ings" (p. 29). In other words, it deals primarily with the king's creative and corrective role in human affairs and not with the duties of citizenship.

2. The welfare measures were a "means to permit men to rise within the causality law of Dharma towards the overcoming of their suffering, the aim of Buddhism" (p. 27); they were meant "to make it easier for his [Asoka's] subjects to observe the Moral Law – if not to provide them with leisure opportunities for meditation toward the pursuit of Nirvana . . ." (p. 28). This assertion reminds us of the multiplier effect of the acts of righteous and wicked kings, which we expounded earlier vis-à-vis the *cakkavatti* cycle. It could be said that Asokan dharma implied that a prosperous and just society is the base upon which the pursuit of more specialized religious virtues can be raised. Sarkisyanz argues that while it is true that the "Ashokan social emphasis was not identical with the ethos of the Buddhist order of monks striving out of the world of Impermanence toward Nirvana, . . . it is nevertheless Buddhist ethos: the ethos of lay Buddhism acting within the world of Impermanence, in pursuing Nirvana by creating the outward social conditions for such striving towards the overcoming of Attachment. It was this social ethos that the Ashokan tradition of historical Buddhism has transmitted, a political lay tradition within Buddhism" (p. 36).

We have now reached a position where we have established that the Asokan dharma comprised an encompassing positive role for kingship as the foremost creative and regulating force in the polity; indeed, we may say that the dharma of kingship maintains society as polity. From this position we must now pass on to another that is unorthodox. The Asokan polity would not be half as intriguing if we stopped at an idealized account of it as a conscious striving after and implementation of benevolent kingship attributed to the *cakkavatti*. In fact precisely because Asoka made a total claim for the role of kingship, his policies simultaneously portrayed the other face of wide-scale regulation and domestication and of political absolutism, which too have left their mark on the Buddhist polities of Southeast Asia.

The edicts relating to the state propagation and regulation of dharma through the use of administrative officials are worthy of close scrutiny. We have already noted that at several places Asoka conceived it his responsibility to preach and oversee the practice of the duties of householders (i.e., the householder's morality). This aspect of his policy should be assessed in conjunction with several edicts relating to the appointment of officers to promote morality and to administer charities. Thus Pillar Edict VII declares: "My highest officials, who have authority over large numbers of people, will expound and spread the precepts of Dharma. I have instructed the provincial governors, too, who are in charge of many hundred thousand people, concerning how to guide people devoted to Dharma. . . . I have appointed officers charged with the spread of Dharma, called *Dharma-Mahamatras*. . . ." References to officials promoting dharma and super-

vising morals are found in Pillar Edict I, Rock Edict XII, Rock Edict III, Kalinga Edict II, Pillar Edict IV; but it is Rock Edict V that in making a brazen boast about the ubiquity of officials, raises some uneasiness in our minds. We are told in this edict that Asoka created the posts of *mahamatras*, which did not previously exist, in the thirteenth year of his reign; that these officers were commissioned to work with "all the sects," with those devoted to dharma among the peoples living on the western borders of the kingdom, among "the soldiers and their chiefs," "the ascetics and householders," "the poor and the aged," and among prisoners. It continues: "They have been assigned everywhere – here [at Pataliputra], in all the provincial towns, and in the harems of my brothers and sisters and other relatives," indeed "everywhere in my dominions."

These claims, even if they were exaggerated and never actualized, are interesting as statements of intent and as idealized objectives. They show the other side of the coin that *cakkavatti* ambitions can have resonances that may sound Orwellian to another era. Weber was probably correct in his surmise that Buddhism was useful to Asoka for achieving political centralization and the leveling of society (e.g., the destruction of *kshatriya* privilege and the establishment of a patrimonial structure, composed of tax farmers, bureaucracy, and army) and for the "domestication of the masses." Also plausible is his view that Buddhism by virtue of its support of a patrimonial kingship against the ruling strata increasingly took on the aspect of a "democratic religion."

A contemporary scholar – Thapar – too has sensed that the policy of dharma and the propagating and supervising officials it entailed might have been politically efficacious for the control of the vast empire. The dharma doctrine aided the successful centralization policy by eschewing ruthless control through armed strength and championing a policy that undermined the dominance of established orthodoxy, gave support to the nonorthodox religious views of the newly emergent sects that were gathering support among the newly risen commercial class. It also served as a vehicle for unifying small political units, for welding divergent groups and small principalities into a larger whole (Thapar 1961, pp. 144–145). Indeed Thapar even suggests that some of the Pillar Edicts that Asoka issued later in his reign – in his twenty-seventh regnal year to be exact – portray his obsession with dharma and even begin to show a "germ of fanaticism and megalomania" (in the first Pillar Edict), a "growing self adulation" (in the second Pillar Edict), and a tendency to impose on the subjects his own understanding of dharma leaving little choice for the individual, and even losing contact with them (pp. 173–175).

Asokan Impact on the Sangha

The embracing promotional and regulatory role that Asoka took upon himself did have implications not only for the subjects in general but also for the religious specialists, the sects themselves, particularly the sangha

of Buddhist monks. We approach here an issue vital to this book – the relation between the sangha and the polity – in regard to which we are, as with most complex issues, faced with a paradox: Asoka's plea of religious tolerance and the coexistence of sects in Rock Edicts VII and XII on the one hand and on the other his stern disapproval of schism in the Buddhist sangha and his willingness to apply forceful sanctions to keep the order united (Sanchi Pillar Edict and Sarnath Pillar Edict).

For instance, in Rock Edict XII the noble sentiment is expressed that "the faiths of others all deserve to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others." He apparently practiced this enlightened policy, making lavish gifts and appointing officials to administer the "distribution of gifts from myself as well as from the queens" to all sects – brahmin, Buddhist, the Ajivika ascetics, Jaina monks (Pillar Edict VII).

Judged against this backdrop, Asoka's severe edicts denouncing schism in the Buddhist sangha, threatening the schismatic with expulsion from the order and adjuring laymen and officials to act as watchdogs of the sangha's unity, are intriguing. We shall in a subsequent chapter examine the relevant edicts and the relevant portion of the Sinhalese *Mahavamsa* chronicle in detail so as to evolve the Asokan paradigm on the issue of the relation between the sangha and the polity. Here let me point my finger at the implications of the grand conception of the monarchical role that even led him to tell the Buddhist monks – the religious virtuosi – those Buddhist texts that deserved their attention. Thus in the Bhabra Rock Edict, Asoka, after paying reverence to the trinity – Buddha, dharma, and sangha – proceeds to advise the monks that although whatever the Lord has said is of course well said, "But it is proper for me to enumerate the texts which express true Dharma and which may make it everlasting." A list of texts followed his pronouncement.

Such enthusiastic propagation of dharma not only penetrated the sangha but also had its fateful impact on a category of people located on the geographical margins of civilizations or the deep interiors of civilized polities – namely, the beings variously described as forest people, frontier people, and today as hill tribes, and so on.[10] It is my thesis that the Asokan pronouncements on the spreading of dharma to these peoples partly serve as a historic precedent and charter for the policies of domestication, political incorporation, and even conversion to Buddhism, followed by the governments of Burma, Thailand, and others, toward their allegedly primitive and bothersome hill tribes. I have earlier referred to the Rock Edict XIII, in which Asoka makes the veiled threat to forest peoples that he has the capacity to exercise toward them "the power to punish," despite his re-

[10] It is likely that a vital frontier people who concerned Asoka was the tribes of eastern India (east of the Kalinga region), the tribes that are considered "troublesome" even today!

pentance, if they did not accept the dharma way of life. In Kalinga Edict II Asoka instructs his officials that "unconquered peoples along the borders of my dominions" should trust the emperor who will "forgive them for offenses which can be forgiven" and who exhorts them to practice dharma; in Pillar Edict I he commands that his "officials of the border districts" should enforce his instructions. All this is inspired, on the one hand, by the credo of benevolent kingship that "All men are my children . . . I seek the same things for all men" (Kalinga Edicts I and II) and that "I consider the promotion of the people's welfare my highest duty . . ." (Rock Edict VI); yet, on the other hand, we also catch a glimpse of an associated (and not contradictory) motive that the dissemination of dharma serves to "establish their [the border people's] confidence in the King."[11]

Asoka's policy of pacification of border peoples and his advice to his successors – that if they made future conquests, they should maintain their hold through the spread of dharma rather than by the rule of the sword – has of course scriptural precedent in the *suttas* concerning the *cakkavatti,* which we already have discussed, particularly the *Cakkavatti Sihanada Suttanta* which describes the wheel-turning emperor as allowing the conquered kings to keep their possessions upon their undertaking to observe the five precepts of the layman. But this is an aspect of his ethic that was rarely followed by actual Buddhist kings in strict detail toward their subjugated enemies and rivals, even when they happened to be of the same faith. As innumerable examples from Thailand and Burma and Laos show, the subjugated king was indeed made a tributary and vassal but often only after initial pillage, massacre, and the taking away of many prisoners. Such policies were often followed against monarchs and peoples who were fellow Buddhists.

But there is another Asokan tradition that better serves as a charter. The tradition that the great king sent out various missions to forest areas, border peoples, and to neighboring countries to spread the dhamma has not been lost on his historical successors, who today, as we shall see later, invoke together with this Asokan precedent, the ringing words of the *Vinaya* in launching certain missionary programs: "Wander forth, Oh monks, for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the welfare, benefit, and happiness of gods and men. Preach, Oh monks, this doctrine, which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good at the end, with its meaning and in its letter and complete holy life. Do not two of you take the same road" (*Vinaya* 1, 4).

That the legend of the nine missions and scriptural passages like the preceding constituted precedents for subsequent proselytization is one mat-

[11] This reading finds some support in Thapar (1961, pp. 170–171). She indicates that the Kalinga Edict II was probably directed at officials who perhaps worked among the frontier tribes of eastern India who had been incorporated or brought into closer relations after the Kalinga war. Thapar sees that the king's proclamation of paternal love and concern is symptomatic of the emphasis upon "building up confidence among the borderers."

ter; the actual historicity of the legends and the correct exegesis of scripture is another. First of all, granting the historicity of Asoka's missionary programs in India and to Ceylon (there is no convincing historical evidence for his missions to Southeast Asia), we yet have the anomaly that while the empire was vast, the religion proposed by the emperor was actually much smaller in incidence, existing mainly in parts of northern India. Secondly, while granting again that during Asokan times monks must have been zealous in the teaching and spreading of the message, yet it is doubtful, claims Dutt (1966, pp. 22–23), whether missionaries actually formed organized bands under Moggaliputta Tissa and were assigned specified regions to proselytize as told in the legend, because "there happens to be no tradition in Buddhism of this kind of organized preaching" and because there is no direction in the canon about joint and organized missionary effort; the founder's exhortation "Do not two of you take the same road" advocates merely individual effort.[12] Finally, it is argued that "though a proselytising religion, Buddhism is not, in the same sense as Christianity is, a 'missionary' one" (p. 23); although in later history, groups of monks have gone from one seat of Buddhism to some other seat in another country, "their object always was to take part in the decision of some ecclesiastic matter which concerned the Sangha only." All this is largely true, but we should say a little more and take note of the various missions of monks exchanged over the centuries among the Sinhalese, Thai, and Burmese kingdoms, missions sponsored by kings but whose immediate purpose was to revive *upasampada* ordination whenever the sangha was in decline. Be that as it may, we must distinguish this old pattern from the new pattern of missionary efforts, in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, which are indeed a product of these countries' contact with colonialism, and particularly with Christian missionary effort, to whose challenge they reacted by borrowing certain of the tools and policies of the more privileged aggressor religion itself. Thus we must date the new pattern of revivalist Buddhist missionary efforts from about the 1850s onward and separate it from the old pattern of exchange of missions. But insofar as the new missionary program refers itself to past percedents as its charter, it shares a continuity with the past, a continuity that is subjectively important to the actors themselves.

There is one last theme expressed in the Asokan edicts that we would like to highlight if only because it is a pregnant issue, judged from the hindsight of periodic purifications attempted by enthusiastic reformers or

[12] Thapar (1901) reads the evidence somewhat differently. She seems to accept the *Mahavamsa* account of Buddhist missions composed of monks being sent out to various parts of the subcontinent and adjacent regions under the auspices of the Buddhist Council, which was held in Asoka's reign (c. 250 B.C.). (The biggest mission is described as consisting of the four monks who went to the Himalayas.) But Thapar separates these "purely religious" Buddhist missions from the "diplomatic missions" and "embassies" sent under the direction of the king (frequently to neighboring polities), which were composed of the special body of lay *mahamatta* officials who were concerned to spread and propagate the official dhamma policy of the king. Thapar does not comment on the magnitude and proselytization pattern of the monk-missions.

puritanical trends. And in Buddhism they characteristically take the form of devaluation of ceremonials as productive of religious merit.

The reformist, puritanical, or protestant attitude (these are words of today) is well expressed in Rock Edict IX:

> People perform various ceremonies. Among the occasions on which ceremonies are performed are sicknesses, marriages of sons or daughters, children's births, and departures on journeys. Women in particular have recourse to many diverse, trivial, and meaningless ceremonies.
>
> It is right that cremonies be performed. But this bears little fruit. . . .
>
> Other ceremonies are of doubtful value. They may achieve their purpose, or they may not. Moreover the purpose for which they are performed are limited to this world.

In Rock Edict I Asoka somewhat cryptically and ambiguously puts restrictions on feasting: "No living creature shall be slaughtered here [at Pataliputra], and no festive gatherings shall be held. . . . King Priyadarsi sees a great many evils in festive gatherings. Yet he also approves of some kinds of festivals."

In place of ceremonies (and feasting), which bear little fruit, Asoka, by beautifully exploiting his linguistic device, recommends *dharma-mangala,* the ceremony of dharma, which consists as we have seen before in humane relationships marked by proper treatment of slaves and servants, reverence to teachers, kindness to living creatures, liberality to priests and ascetics, and so on. This ceremony of dharma "is not limited to time. Even if it does not achieve its objective in this world, it produces unlimited merit in the next world. But if it produces its object in this world, it achieves both effects: the purpose desired in this world and unlimited merit in the next."

But despite the devaluation of ceremonials – it certainly has the flavor of an attack on the overelaborateness and formalism of brahmanical rites – an active reformist of Asoka's ilk in turn ended up by substituting new rites that breathe the new message, rites that inexorably portray some of the very characteristics previously denounced. Thus in Asoka's time flourished the cult of veneration of *stupas* in which were enshrined the relics of great men – teacher, saint, and king. "The growth of this cult during Ashoka's time is clearly attested by the number of *stupas* in India which have been identified as dating from this period. It was this, associated as it was with Buddhism, which more then anything else marks the beginning of the characterization of the Buddhist movement in religious terms" (Ling 1973, p. 166).

Indeed it would be quite apposite to assert that in Asoka's time Buddhism, already well established, had developed its own cult of the *stupas* to counter the brahmanical cult of sacrifice. It seems possible that the cult of the *caityas* and worship of the *stupas* made a point of attracting the simple folk by incorporating popular cults. The *caityas* previously were sacred enclosures associated with earth spirits and fertility deities.

But just as this Asokan duality of reformism and cultism is manifest in later times in the acts of zealous kings, it would be incomplete if we failed

to indicate that this same duality is represented in the canonical literature itself. Our text is the already cited (Chapter 2) *Mahaparinibbana Suttanta*, which, precisely because it purports to be the Buddha's last acts and words before his death, packs into one document all the variegated aspects of early Buddhism. In the early part of this *sutta* the Buddha says to his disciples that the brethren will prosper so long as they are instructed in six conditions, which include, to name a few, perseverence in "kindness of action, speech and thought towards their fellow disciples," dividing without partiality and sharing in common all things they receive, and living among the saints. The practice of these virtues is "productive of freedom," "untarnished by the desire for future life, or by the belief in the efficacy of outward acts" (*Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part II, p. 85). Now the hope of a future life in heaven is what Buddha often referred to as "craving," and belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies as "delusion." (They are the two *nissayas*.) And the Buddha reiterates at several points in the *sutta* the great fruit borne by "upright conduct," "earnest contemplation," and "intelligence," namely, freedom "from the Intoxications, that is to say, from the Intoxication of Sensuality, from the Intoxication of Becoming, from the Intoxication of Delusion, from the Intoxication of Ignorance" (p. 86).

It is therefore most interesting that despite this strong devaluation of the belief in the efficacy of rites, at the very end of the *sutta*, we have the Buddha himself allegedly propagating the cult of the *stupas*. The Buddha, we shall recall, instructs Ananda that the remains of the Tathagata should be treated like the remains of a king of kings: "At the four cross roads a cairn should be erected to the Tathagata. And whosoever shall there place garlands or perfumes or paint, or make salutation there, or become in its presence calm in heart – that shall long be to them for a profit and a joy" (p. 156). We have already seen how after the cremation of the Buddha's corpse, his relics were distributed among various claimants and that in all ten *stupas* were built – eight for his remains, one for the vessel, and one for the embers. Strictly speaking, it is important to note that it is to his fellow monks that the Buddha denounces the belief in the efficacy of rites and that it is the laity that he instructs that his body be given for cremation and subsequent building of *stupas* over the relics. But for later times it is not for this distinction between the way of the monk and of the layman that this text is important; rather, it (like certain others) sanctions at one and the same time the spirit of reformism as well as the cult of the *stupas* in their commemorative and apotropaic aspects. Asoka's dual action is therefore attributable to a precedent.

The Collapse of the Edifice

Roughly 50 years after the death of Asoka his empire fragmented, and the Mauryan dynasty of which he was the most magnificent representative col-

lapsed and made way for the Sungas. How are we to view the causes of this ruin when the edifice itself is billed as a manifestation of a grand conception of kingship that realized its potential in the biggest empire India has known until its more recent unification by the British?

We are in this early part of the book more concerned with sketching the religio-political ideology than with its grounding in political, social, and economic facts. Nevertheless, a brief comment is called for on the dramatic petering out of Asokan imperialism.

Although the Asokan polity took shape some centuries after the rise of Buddhism, yet it makes some sense to say that both phenomena are associated with similar overall institutional developments in the Indian scene. The change from pastoral to irrigated agriculture (particularly in the Gangetic plain), whose technological basis was furthered by developments in metal processing, the proliferation of rural communities articulated around rice, which itself provided the basis for a significant demographic increase, the rise of urban centers and, with them, of commercial groups, the spread of the cash nexus and merchant banking, the proliferations of crafts and artisan occupations, the corresponding expansion of long-distance trade and the opening of trade routes – these we are told are the infrastructural factors associated with the rise of both heterodoxy and new experiments in kingship and centralized states.[13]

From the point of view of political development the time was ripe for the crystallizing of centralized polities or at least polities that could pull together localized or locality systems into a larger framework. In other words, the social and economic density was conducive to monarchical crystallization; the *janapada*-based agriculture as well as the economy of urban constellations could provide a basis for monarchical polities. The fluidity of the times was also signified by the rise of new royal houses, some of them non-*kshatriya* parvenus by the standards of brahmanical chroniclers.

There are numerous speculations on the causes of the dramatic collapse of the Mauryan empire. Some would argue that Asoka's pacifist policy undermined the military strength of the empire, which because of its consequent softness was unable to withstand the Greek invasions in the northwest; others have seen fissures in the economy – resulting from excessive taxation and debasement of the coinage – as the cause; still another view sees the collapse as due to a successful brahmanical reaction that capitalized on the public's resentment of the regulation and supervision exercised by the Asokan officials, particularly the *mahamatras*.

Perhaps the most relevant consideration is the logistical one: whether, given the institutional mechanisms of control and extraction of that time, such a large empire could be maintained and protected from fragmentation, once the extraordinary man himself had left the stage. The answer

[13] See Fick (1920), Rhys Davids (1903), and Kosambi (1956) for early Buddhist India, and Thapar (1961), Gokhale (1966), and Dutt (1962) for the Mauryan era.

to this rests on how we imagine the sinews and muscles of the Asokan polity actually worked.

The formal picture of the Mauryan state – based on Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Asoka's inscriptions – certainly takes on the aspect of a vast nonfederal centralized empire – which was divided into four provinces with their four capitals, surrounded only at the borders by autonomous states, and capped by the emperor in his capital of Pataliputra, whose hosts of officials appointed by and directly responsible to him held the enterprise on a tight rein. According to this view, Asoka exercised extensive political and economic control over the empire: "The Mauryan centralised monarchy became a paternal despotism under Asoka" (Thapar 1961, p. 95). The dispersed geographical placement of the king's inscriptions connive as evidence of actual direct control of a far-flung empire. Buddhist legends reinforce the might of this sovereignty: Thus Asoka is reputed to have raided the relic chamber at Rajagraha and redistributed the relics throughout the empire and to have built 84,000 *stupas*, each located in a political division of his domain. Such cosmological metaphors may at best suggest a ritual hegemony rather than actual political control as understood by modern political scientists.

Perhaps a plausible characterization of the Asokan polity (held together by the ideology of dharma) would be that at its apex was a king of kings subsuming in superior ritual and even fiscal relation a vast collection of local principalities and regional clusters. Asoka's genius (and also that of his forebears) is that he brought such an empire under one umbrella, an achievement that was given concrete expression by the king's officials and missions sent to the farther provinces, including the border regions, as propagators and implementers of his unification and pacification dharma policy.

Such a political edifice was not so much a bureaucratized centralized imperial monarchy as a kind of galaxy-type structure with lesser political replicas revolving around the central entity and in perpetual motion of fission or incorporation. Indeed, it is clear that this is what the much-cited but little understood *cakkavatti* model represented: that a king as a wheel-rolling world ruler by definition required lesser kings under him who in turn encompassed still lesser rulers, that the raja of rajas was more a presiding apical ordinator than a totalitarian authority between whom and the people nothing intervened except his own agencies and agents of control. Thus we begin to appreciate that the *cakkavatti* model was a closer representation of actual facts than has usually been imagined by virtue of misreading the rhetoric.

Although we have no detailed evidence on the organization of the Asokan polity in galactic terms, we see references in the Pali *Vinaya Pitaka* (particularly in the *Vibhanga*, *Mahavagga*, and *Cullavagga* sections), which unambiguously suggest that the political systems of at least eastern India (particularly in the Vaisali-Pataliputra regions) during the time of

early Buddhism were constituted on galactic lines. Since the Pali *Vinaya* refers to events up to the end of the Second Council and has no reference to the Third Council alleged to have taken place in the time of Asoka, we may attribute the following details to the period immediately preceding Asoka.[14] Misra (1972) gives this valuable information:

> In the *Vibhanga* of the Parajika 2 there occurs a definition of kings: *Rajano nama pathavyaraja* (king of the earth), *padesaraja* (local king), *mandalika* (king's deputies), *antarabhogika* (subordinate chieftains), *akkhadassa* (judges), *mahamattas* (ministers). . . . *Padesa* and *mandala* were strictly political units headed by subordinate kings or king's nominees whom territorially big kingdoms had to appoint for convenience of administration in distant parts of the empire. They accepted the suzerainty of the central head . . . by virtue of his office, the king was considered the best and foremost among all (*raja mukham manussaman*). The *Mahavagga* makes a division into powerful kings, kings of middle status, and petty kings (p. 211).

These facts are in accord with our notion of the galactic polity and the conception of *cakkavatti*[15] and plausibly relate to the Asokan period as well. "Since there was no fundamental political unity among the peoples of the Mauryan empire, political disintegration was almost inevitable" (Thapar 1961, p. 211). The ideas of a unitary state and of political loyalty as applicable to such an entity are clearly inappropriate for the time. The magnificence of the Asokan polity is that it briefly and temporarily achieved so much and found a conscious formulation for itself in Buddhism-inspired dharma implemented by a king who organized and held together a vast collectivity. But India already had the contours of a caste-based social order that had no compulsive need to find an overall unified representation under the aspect of kingship; furthermore, it was sufficiently diversified linguistically and culturally to resist political unification. In the Indian context the social order was prior to its political expression. This explains the success of the brahmanical restoration and the fragmenting of the subcontinent

[14] The *Vinaya Pitaka*, insofar as its contents go, may be said to have been composed before the Third Council of Asoka. In actual fact, of course, it contains matter relating to the earliest as well as later periods of Buddhism, and its present shape crystallized long after the Buddha's time. It was committed to writing in Ceylon around the first century B.C. Scholars tend to think that the *Patimokkha* is the earliest section in time, followed by sections such as *Vibhanga*, *Cullavagga*, and *Mahavagga*; the legends of the councils and the *Parivara* are the latest stratum.

[15] I may cite further details from the *Vinaya* that may be matched with those given in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and in the Asokan inscriptions.

Other political units mentioned are *gama* (village) and urban concentrations such as *nigama*, *nagara*. *Janapada* also occurs to denote territory with people.

The *Vinaya* also refers to political officers: the *mahamattas*, high officers who probably had ministerial rank, such as the *senanayaka mahamatta* (general), *voharika mahamatta* (judicial official who arbitrated property disputes and criminal offenses), *ganakamahamatta* (revenue officer), *upacaraka mahamatta* (officer of the royal household), and so on. See Misra 1972, pp. 211–219, where he also gives names of lesser officers. It is best that we do not take Misra's translations as representing a strict division of labor and demarcated competencies attached to positions in these older polities.

into small-scale local monarchical systems. Such fragmenting did not damage the economic prosperity of the time, for the new commercial segments functioned and flourished despite the political decline of the Mauryas.

But whatever the fate of the Buddhist-inspired and dharma-based kingship in providing the form and shape of society or collectivity in India, it took deep hold among India's neighboring peoples where it assumed an effective and enduring organizing role in the constitution of emergent societies. It is this transformation that we want to study now, a transformation that combines transplanted Indian conceptions with indigenous orientations to produce a new amalgam, a new configuration that must be understood in its own terms.

6. Thai Kingship and Polity in Historical Perspective

A fundamental and striking feature that Sinhalese or Burmese or Thai concepts of Buddhist kingship stridently assert is conspicuously missing in the Asokan inscriptions. Asoka never once referred to himself in the inscriptions as a *bodhisattva*. As we have seen, Asoka's objective of attaining to heaven through his advocacy of dharma cannot be mistaken for the universal liberation or messianic promise of a *bodhisattva*.[1]

This *bodhisattva* ideal of the king as a cosmic liberator with its attendant cosmological representation in palace architecture and in calendrical rites, an ideal that also wove in the soteriological claims of a wheel-wielding *cakkavatti* who would deliver his subjects from immediate woes, is decidedly a later development removed in time from the Asokan era.

The precise description of the transplantation of Buddhist (and Hindu) ideas of kingship and polity outside India, and the manner of their taking root and forming a distinctive configuration in Sinhalese, Mon, Khmer, Burmese, or Thai soil, as the case may be, is difficult to describe for lack of definitive evidence. Yet one's posture on this issue has consequences for arranging whatever facts are known into meaningful patterns.

In trying to state one's own position and perspective, it is perhaps well to begin with a comment by Mus:

> Throughout the general context of Monsoon Asia, the threshold will be found at the level where the Sovereignty of a centralized state, with its legal apparatus, comes into contact with the dense nexus of local, "cadastral" cults and unwritten practice. In that vast area, plural communities have, in that way, gradually evolved unifying patterns in a differentiated setting that resemble our conception of a Division of Social Labour. The main purpose of State Religion – Hinduism or Buddhism or, in other quarters, Confucianism and Taoism – seems to have been the authentication of the whole system, enlisting, as it did, at ground level, the tutelary spirits and genii of the commonfolk. Kingship, with its dependent officialdom, was thus built above the plane of cleavage, in a kind of higher world of the gods, symbolised, with a great variety of myths and images, of the sacred City, the temples and the palace (1964, p. 452).

Direct contacts with this superior world were made by means of the periodicity of the official calender; but outside this regularized calender,

[1] See Mus' comment in Sarkisyanz (1965), pp. xviii, xix.

contacts with it were not explicitly sought and, if made, were portents of trouble. "Something had to be out of order to call for such unseasonable interventions," and under such circumstances the monarch's "quasi-divine aloofness gave way, to the most abrupt and often deadly efficacity" (pp. 451–452).

While fully agreeing with Mus' representation of the role of the king as giving a cosmological unity and a higher-level integration of the local cults, we wish to suggest another important dimension of its mobilizing and integrating role. It is likely that the transplanted Indian conceptions provided the appropriate idiom and ideology for emergent centralized political communities based on rice agriculture and also capitalizing on maritime trade and thereby reaching a certain level of demographic and sociopolitical density. The ideology, with its religious, ritual, political, and economic implications as a total package, was sought, appropriated, and transformed to suit a Southeast Asian context and milieu. For understanding this reciprocal interaction and amalgamation we could well use Weber's famous concept of "elective affinity."

If this were the case then in these emergent political entities – say, early Sinhalese or Mon or later Burmese or Thai kingdoms – Buddhism first espoused by king and his court and functionaries must have spread outward to the subjects at large. Indeed, it may well have been propagated *pari passu* with the political incorporation of outlying peoples and the "domestication" of the masses. Hocart's thesis of nationalization and centralization by which "the King's state is reproduced in miniature by his vassals"[2] is a particularly apt characterization of this process. Compelling as is Hocart's thesis, nevertheless, it is necessary to reinforce an elitist view of this politicization and imitation process with considerations of why and how Buddhism as a new religion was attractive to the humble rice-growing villagers in terms of their own everyday interests, let alone their participation in the political processes of a centralizing polity. While present-day anthropological studies such as my *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand* (1970) can attempt to answer how Buddhism is woven into, gives meaning to, and is in turn given meaning by the interests and activities of villagers, we cannot answer in similar terms for earlier times. And since texts, chronicles, annals, monuments, and inscriptions sponsored by and for kings are the primary source for historical reconstruction, they may well conspire to give a monarchical and elitist view of the historical process. We should constantly bear in mind this narrow basis on which our historical understanding rests.

There are other biases and problems to guard against, which have been perceptively discussed, for instance, by Casparis (Hall 1962) and Berg (Soedjatmoko 1965) with regard to historical writing on Indonesia in the early period. Their discussions have relevance for other Southeast Asian polities as well. A most critical problem is how to describe and evaluate the Indian influences on the Southeast Asian kingdoms.

[2] See Hocart (1950, 1936) and Tambiah (1970).

The work of many Indian scholars, especially those associated with the Greater Indian Society, founded in 1926, is problematic, sometimes to the point of being crudely imperialistic. Rabindranath Tagore's foreword to the first number of the regular journal of the Greater Indian Society (1934) clearly shows that interest in the subject of Indian influence abroad was part of the movement for the national revival of India. As Casparis notes: "The Indian scholars are less interested in Indonesian culture as a whole than in its Indian components" (p. 129). Some of these scholars went too far in referring to "ancient Indian colonies," thus implying Indian political domination. An example is R. C. Majumdar, who went so far as to claim that "the art of Java and Kambuja was no doubt derived from India and fostered by the Indian rulers of these colonies" (p. 129). There are however other Indian scholars who have been more restrained in their claims in referring to Indian cultural expansion or merely influence.

Indian influence there certainly was but how are we to represent it? From the famous Dutch scholars of Indonesia let us select a few. Krom coined the term "Hindu-Javanese" to indicate, contra earlier scholars who viewed older Indonesian culture as a form of "Hindu culture transplanted on Indonesian soil," that this culture was "a harmonious combination of Indian and Indonesian elements." "According to Krom, the artists who constructed the great Javanese monuments were neither Hindus nor Javanese, but 'Hindu-Javanese,' i.e., Javanese who followed the cultural traditions of the Hindus" (Casparis, p. 126).

In comparison Stutterheim insisted on seeing how foreign elements were assimilated into Indonesian culture. He argued for example that "the old Javanese *candi* is something essentially different from an Indian temple and sometimes compared Indian influence in Indonesia with Greek and Roman influence in Western Europe" (Casparis, p. 135). He avoided terms such as "Hindu-Javanese" because "they might give the impression that older Indonesian culture was a mixture or synthesis of Hindu and Javanese cultures: the old Javanese culture should rightly be considered an Indonesian culture in which Indian influence, however great it may be, is only something accessory." "Therefore, the fundamental problem for Stutterheim was not where exactly the Indian elements came from (the central problem for scholars in the Greater Indian Society and affiliated circles), but rather how these foreign elements became integrated in the pattern of older Indonesian culture" (p. 139).

Van Leur's contributions were on the same lines. An economist who examined the records of the Dutch East India Company, he put together a picture of native commerce in precapitalist times and established its developed character in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Van Leur's position as regards Indian influence on older Indonesian history is especially noteworthy for the creative role it attributes to local rulers: "Considering the position of Indian traders in Indonesia in modern times, Van Leur refutes the opinion that Indian culture would have been brought to Indonesia mainly by Indian traders, but gives the main credit to Indo-

nesian ruling circles who appealed to Indian priests and other experts" (Casparis, p. 146).

Casparis describes Bosch as taking a middle road between the greater-India position of certain Indian scholars and that of Stutterheim. Bosch considered "Old Javanese culture basically Indian, but changed by various kinds of javanization" (p. 137). Commenting on an article by Bosch entitled "Local Genius," Casparis makes a judgment that we shall bear in mind in viewing the spread of Buddhism to other Southeast Asian polities: "One of the conclusions, which is fully guaranteed by the facts in my opinion, is that the Indian influence in Indonesia was not so much the result of an Indian effort to expand their culture as rather of Indonesian initiative in assimilating those elements of Indian culture to which they felt attracted" (p. 156).

Structural Historical Accounts

We are not undertaking the grand task of reviewing the spread of Buddhism from India to various parts of Southeast Asia but the much narrower one of noting the ideological conceptions and historical features that have gone into comprising Thai kingship and Thai polity.

It is appropriate to introduce this narrower issue by considering the sequential structure of the contents of *Jinakalamali* (Buddhadatta 1962), which was written in A.D. 1516 by a Thai monk-elder named Ratanapanna who resided at Rattavanavihara at Chiangmai. We are particularly interested in this account because it purports to give a history of the Buddhist religion. *Jinakalamali* actually means "the Garland of the Epochs of Buddhism."

The work is written in three parts. The first part deals with the Buddha's life history – his aspiration when a *bodhisattva* to become a Buddha and the steps that led to his enlightenment. The second portion deals with the history of Buddhism in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and is based on the accounts of earlier chronicles such as *Mahavamsa, Thupavamsa, Bodhivamsa, Dathavamsa,* and *Lalatadhatuvamsa.* The third part gives a religious and political account of the various polities situated in Laos, Cambodia, and Siam. It describes the religious intercourse in the form of exchange of missions between Ceylon and the Siamese polities. It relates the important story of the monk Sumana, who had visited Rammanadesa, where he had learned Sinhalese Buddhism, which he later introduced to the newly emergent kingdom of Sukhodaya. No less important is the story of a miraculous Buddha image brought to Thailand from Ceylon, and of the famous Emerald Buddha – which also originated in Ceylon – and after various vicissitudes found its way to Thailand, finally to preside at the royal shrine situated in the precincts of the grand palace at Bangkok as a palladium of the kingdom. The work also devotes some space to the story of King Aniruddha of Pagan in Burma.

Let me comment on two features of these contents. Firstly, the monk-

chronicler who is interested in giving a joint account of the origins and spread of both Buddhism and kingship traces the path traveled by authentic Buddhism from India to Sri Lanka and from there to the Thai kingdoms. Whatever might have been the actual history, this is the officially promoted and actually accepted account. Thai history is represented as a part of and a realization of Buddhist history. Secondly, in the immediate transmission of Sinhalese Buddhism to Sukhodaya the neighboring Burmese polity of Pagan is directly implicated. Therefore, in dealing with the place and nature of the king and religion in Sukhodaya – which is idealized in Thai historiography as the Thai people's first and glorious achievement in religion, art and architecture, and political organization, and the root of Siamese culture and civilization – we must necessarily pay attention to neighboring Pagan, whose origin somewhat precedes in time that of the Siamese kingdom. We must also include the great Khmer civilization lying to its east and whose importance is also attested by the myth of the Emerald Buddha, to which we shall return shortly.

The kind of genealogy traced by the author of *Jinakalamali* whereby he placed his own kingdom of Chiangmai as a genuine heir and protector of true Buddhism is of course replicated in other standard chronicles. Henry Burnay, for example, wrote of the *Hman Nan Chronicle*, whose composition was begun in 1829: "I possess a copy of this work in thirty-nine volumes. It commences with the creation of the world, according to the Buddhist system of cosmogony, and after giving some account of the kings of Magadha and Central India, and of the life of Gaudama, relates a history of the kings of Tagoung, Prome, Pegu, and Ava, coming down to the year 1821" (Htoot, in Hall 1962, p. 51).

Moreover, many chronicles also legitimated the kingship as a realization of prophecies attributed to the Buddha or his disciples. This justification is prominent in certain inscriptions as well.

But this tracing of their descent by particular Southeast Asian manifestations to India and/or Sri Lanka is combined with a timeless and static account that the duality of Buddhism and kingship had exercised its sovereignty in the kingdom, indeed was its foundation and distinctive feature, from the very beginning. Both *sasana* and kingship are thus considered as permanent concomitants of the enduring polity; there is no characterization of them as making their entry at a point of time and expanding their frontiers from a center as a civilizing process and thus gradually bringing the people and terrain under their combined authority. Rather, the representation of the kingdom in its completed aspect and as a primordial entity is a necessary concomitant of the sacred cosmology. Once this frame is taken as enduring, then it is possible to envisage and concede internal imbalances in the form of periodic purgings and restoration of kingdom and religion.[3]

[3] Shorto (in Hall 1962) gives an illuminating commentary on the *Nidana Arambhakatha*, which is a Mon genealogy of kings. The *Nidana* is primarily concerned with justifying and legitimating the monarchy in the person of the reigning king according

The Political Emergence of the Thais

Our concern now is to trace the *political* emergence of the Thai, especially in Siam, indicate the environment in which it took place, and outline the ideology, particularly in the form of Sinhalese Pali Buddhism that was self-consciously espoused by the Thai polities that emerged specifically in the thirteenth century.

It is usual to speak of the stretch of time from the beginnings of the Christian era until about the thirteenth century A.D. as the period when, to use Coedès' (1968) phrase, the "Indianized States" flourished in Southeast Asia. According to the historians of farther India, there emerged, as a result of cultural and commercial contacts with Indian civilization, especially from the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. onward, new political entities on the Indo-Chinese peninsula and the islands of Indonesia – entities that in some respects were local reworkings of kingdoms in mainland India in that people and territory were brought under the centralized rule of sacralized kingship. Examples of the kingdoms in question are Funan, Angkor, Champa, and the many polities of Sumatra and Java. Nearer home in Thailand, before the political emergence of the Thai, the territory was in the divided possession of the Mons, who controlled the upper Chao Phraya, and the Khmers, who dominated the lower Chao Phraya and the upper Mekhong.

It is undeniable that in these emergent Indianized states it was the institution of kingship and the royal cult, elaborately served by brahman priests who went across from India, that gave them a politico-religious ideology and mold. The institution of caste itself was not transplanted to old Khmer or Burmese societies (though one cannot overlook the presence in them of certain caste ideas, especially in the former). Therefore, caste did not provide a society-wide organizational frame. Rather, that frame was provided by the combination of the *kshatriya* ruler and the brahman priest in a new relation that was different from the classical relation in

to a highly stylized formula. The view of kingship is "mystical" – the nation is preserved by the king's *anubhau* (mystical power often associated with the possession of magical objects). Shorto points out that although in Dhammacetti's time large parts of the country, in particular most of the territory east of the Sittang, were still pagan, yet there is no citing of Buddhism's introduction as a stage in a "civilizing process"; there are passing references to Buddhism "as an institution fluctuating and indeed requiring periodical purgings, but generally flourishing." "Even those works which draw more on the religious theme set the coming of the Sasana almost at the beginning of historical time, making it a permanent concomitant of the abiding state" (p. 70).

"The world picture which forms the ground of the *rajawan* is that of the continuing institution of the Mon nation, brought into being by a miraculous genesis which, like the biblical Creation, sets the beginning of relevant time, and renewed at the hours of greatest disaster by further supernatural interventions. The nation is wholly subsumed in the king: relations between states are a matter of embassies . . . wars are settled by the swords of the king's personal champions, or in the last resort of the king himself. . . . This concept of the world as a stasis is diametrically opposed to what now would be regarded as the essential presentation of any 'history' at all" (p. 71).

caste-bound Indian society. An Indianized state par excellence where this relation took shape over time was Angkor. It is also undeniable that certain of the Indian doctrines, rituals, iconography, and epics could not have been transplanted and creatively worked upon in Southeast Asia if they did not speak directly to the societies at large and their peoples.

The political emergence of the Thai is generally taken as sounding the death knell of the older Indianized Mon and Khmer kingdoms that stood in their path. The origins of the Thai and their early history in Siam (and northern Burma) are shadowy and fortunately not very relevant for our story. It is traditional to begin the account with the kingdom of Nan Chao, from where apparently Thai settlements spread outward into northern Siam. Let us give as one relevant landmark of their political emergence the polity that is usually referred to as Chiang Saen, of which it is said that "from the ninth century onwards it played the main role in directing the course of early political development of the Thai colonists in the Upper Menam valley" (Gogoi 1968 p. 211). Despite the alleged achievements of Prince P'rohm, who founded the city of Muang Fang (Wood 1924 p. 50; Gogoi), and some of his successors, there is a long gap in the known history of Chiang Saen, a gap that extends to the eleventh century, when some of the Thai communities penetrated central Thailand into the regions of Sawankalok and Phitsanulok, then under Khmer control.[4] The thirteenth century thus constitutes a preeminent era of Thai political accomplishment and cultural effervescence in the upper and middle Mekhong area and the north. It is signified by the formation of the kingdoms of Sukhodaya in central Siam and Lan Na farther north in Chiangmai, the most renowned of their founding rulers being Ram Kamheng and Mengrai respectively.[5]

It is extremely difficult at the moment to figure out which strands of Buddhism influenced the precursors of Sukhodaya and Lan Na, let alone what proportion of the Thai of the latter-day Nan Chao region were Buddhist. Nor must we overlook in assessing the character of Sukhodaya culture and polity the contribution of the Mon-Dvaravati civilization. Much of the early history of ancient Dvaravati is also cloudy, as was their form of Buddhism, which is said to have been (indifferently) Theravada but also probably owed something to Nalanda. In Thailand the Dvaravati Mons are said to have founded around the seventh century a colony in Louvo, with its capital at Lopburi, which in turn spawned settlements farther north. Anyway, the Mon tradition of Buddhism was strongly established in the Lamphun, Lampang, and Phrae districts by the time of the political emergence of the Thai. There are, for instance, Mon inscriptions

[4] "They formed themselves into semi-independent villages (*ban* or *wan*) or towns (*muang* or *mong*) each with its own chief called *Hpaw muanh* (father of *muang*). Early in the twelfth century A.D. the Tai in the Upper Menam valley made of their *muangs* small states under their chieftains called *Chaos*" (Gogoi 1968 p. 212).

[5] The early thirteenth century also saw the founding of the Tai kingdom of Ahom in Assam.

discovered in Lamphun, three of which are dated A.D. 1213, 1217, and 1219 (in a script similar to their inscriptions in Pagan). The persisting vitality of Mon Buddhist traditions at the time when the Thai came into their own politically is attested in two Pali documents: the *Camadevivamsa* (early fifteenth century) and the *Jinakalamalini* (A.D. 1516).

Whatever the circumstantial facts and influences, what we must accept as of prime importance for the ideological inflection of Sukhodaya, and its setting the precedent for later Thai understanding of their history, is that it enthusiastically championed Lankavangsa or Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism. The major stream of influence was no doubt the Sinhalese form, but fertilizing currents diffused also from the Mons of Thaton and, as we shall see shortly, from the Burmese of Pagan. The conspicuous fact is that the Thai chronicles and inscriptions of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries turn the spotlight on their affiliation with Sinhalese Pali Buddhism and the transformation it wrought on their way of life. Thus the famous Sukhodaya inscription (A.D. 1292) of Ram Kamheng is eloquent about the devotion of the king and people to the new Buddhism.[6]

In accepting this formulation one should not confound Pali Buddhism with the "pure" religion of the Pali canon, for even in Polonnaruva, the seat of Sinhalese Buddhism, under Parakrama Bahu I, Mahayanist and Hindu influences were present (Rahula 1956). The same influences were obviously present in early Pagan (Luce 1969) and in Sukhodaya (Griswold 1967) as judged from the evidence of Hindu shrines, of images discovered in the ruins, and of inscriptions. Furthermore, the crosscurrents of the Mon-Khmer civilization were probably too strong and varied to permit their puritanical narrowing under the influence of Theravada Buddhism.

The religious intercourse between Siam (and Burma) with Ceylon is well documented:[7] It ranged from missions, communication of art and architectural styles, to, perhaps most importantly, the founding of the Sinhalese sects of monks in northern Siam and in Burma. The intercourse in Siam begins with Ram Kamheng inviting to Sukhodaya a high priest from Nakon Srithammarat who was preaching the Sinhalese Theravada doctrine; it was climaxed in the fifteenth century by a mission of monks from Chiangmai who went to Ceylon to be reordained and on their return founded the Sinhalese sect, sponsored the revival of Theravada doctrine and Pali literature, and helped in spreading the faith and the energetic building of temples. This fertile encounter with Ceylon was even transposed to the collective consciousness of mythology relating to the Phra Sihing (the Sinhalese Buddha statue), which was the prize for which many Thai principalities fought.

[6] See Coedès-Waithayakon (1965); Le May (1962, p. 123); Eliot (1954, Vol. III, p. 81).

[7] See Coedès (1925), Paranavitana (1947), Griswold (1967), Wickremasinghe (1960), Le May (1962).

Kingship and Polity in Pagan and Sukhodaya

The religious and political conceptions informing the Sukhodaya polity not only consciously related themselves to the prestigious Sinhalese connection but also took early Pagan of the post-Aniruddha period into account.

Of the pre-Aniruddha period in Pagan, Gordon Luce has commented: "It was a period of widespread paganism and, in court circles, of peaceful coexistence between Buddhism and Vaishnavism – the latter perhaps the older culture in these parts . . ." (1969, Vol. 1, p. 283). Luce sees the Aniruddha period (c. 1044–1077 A.D.) as decisive for the stressed position of Buddhism in the religio-political field, culminating in the triumph of Theravada Buddhism: "Buddhism under royal patronage, tends now to be in the ascendant; but in the absence of canonical texts was thinly spread, and still in balance between the Mahayana of East Bengal and Arakan, and the Theravada of Dvaravati and old Prone. . . . After the arrival of the full Tipitika from Ceylon (c. 1075 A.D.) comes the ever expanding triumph of Theravada Buddhism, and the splendid series of what I call . . . the 'Mon' temples" (p. 283).

Our interest in Pagan is to see what kind of theory and cults of kingship emerged there. Let us tentatively view it as the cult of *dharmaraja* (as opposed to the cult of *devaraja* as propagated by the Khmer civilization).

1. An unmistakable feature of the post-Aniruddha Pagan kingship ideology is the kind of royal bombast that is missing in the Asokan inscriptions and that attributes to the king qualities of *cakkavatti* and *bodhisattva* proportions. Thus, for example, Kyanzittha, the "uniter of Burma," (A.D. 1084–1113 being his regnal period) called himself by the title in Sanskrit/Pali: *Sri Tribhuvanadityadhammaraj*, which Luce translates, as "Fortunate Buddhist king, Sun of the Three Worlds" (of men, *devas*, and brahmas). In an inscription made in 1098 upon his visit to Suvannabhumi, the alleged original home of Burma's Buddhism, Kyanzittha referred to himself as "the king of kings, the lord supreme (*paramisvar*), the mighty universal monarch (*balacakkrawar*), who makes his vehicle the White Elephant, the omniscient Bodhisatta, who verily shall be a Buddha and save from misery all living creatures . . ." (Luce, p. 56).

2. A second feature of some value, indexical of the shift of the Buddhist royal ritual from the brahmanical model, is the items of information pertaining to the coronation. We already have evidence from Sri Lanka in the Tamil/Grantha inscription of Polonnaruwa (dated between A.D. 1137 and 1153), in which the coronation of Vijayabahu, who recovered the throne with the help of Aniruddha ("the king in the *Ramanna* country"), is described as follows: "In the prosperous island of Lanka, the cakravartin *Vijayabahudeva* . . . a scion of the lineage of *Iksvaku* of the Solar race, gaining victory over many an enemy, entered Anuradhapura, and at the request of the Buddhist priesthood, put on the sacred crown in order to look after the Buddhist religion. So His Majesty had Buddhist priests in-

vited from Aramana [Ramanna] (to Ceylon), and (with their aid) effected the purification of the Buddhist Order of the Three Fraternities (nikaya)" (p. 40). Our attention in this inscription is focused on the fact that the king himself "put on the crown" and that he did so at the request of the sangha, an expression that is meant to convey that the sangha gave him its support for his assumption of kingship.

A somewhat different picture – the difference lying in the reference to the king's *abhiseka* – is found in the self-laudatory myth that Kyanzittha propagated of himself in the Prome Inscription of A.D. 1093. The inscription says that Kyanzittha, as prophesied by the Buddha, shall reign as an incarnation of Vishnu in Pagan, where seated on the lion-throne he shall receive the royal head anointing in a pillared pavilion, in the presence of his fourfold army and "all the lords of Arahan," that is, the Buddhist clergy. In this account both army and sangha are witnesses to the installation, while the anointer's identity is left unspecified, and the actual act of crowning is not described. (We shall carry forward this inquiry into the details of installation later when we deal with Sukhodaya.)

We can now raise the question of the place of the brahman as a court functionary and the nature of his relation to the *bhikkhu*. In the Pagan period there is certainly evidence of the ceremonial role of brahmans and their making recitations and lustrations during various phases of palace building. There are inscriptional references to "Brahmans (*bumnah*) and, astrologers (*hura*), persons versed in housebuilding," and to "*Sankran* Brahmans," who were doubtless responsible for the Pagan calender. All these brahmans were Vaishnava (p. 68).

The best evidence I can find for the Pagan period for the complementary participation of brahman and *bhikkhu* in palace ritual comes from the New Palace Inscription, A.D. 1102, which, among other things, documents the ceremonies staged at various phases of the building of Kyanzittha's palace.

What emerges is that the Buddhist monks, especially the dignitaries, recited *paritta* and sprinkled lustral water from conch shells mixed with husked rice and "doob grass," at various points of the palace site and over posts and the places where they were to be planted. These were acts averting evil and blessing the project, before the actual digging and building operations began. For example, the main Buddhist ceremonies that took place immediately after the first ceremonial act of making offerings to Indra, the *devas*, and all the images of Buddha in the city of Pagan are described thus by Luce following the inscriptional idiom: ". . . when after the worship of Nār (Visnu), the *mahathera Arahan* arrived with seven leading monks and spread lotus leaves on all the spots where the holes for the various posts were to be dug. Four thousand monks were distributed outside, under eight leaders in reciting the *parit*. Inside there were 108 principal monks, headed by Arahan. . . . Drums and trumpets were

sounded in honour of the Buddha, Gavampati, and all the 4108 monks headed by Arahan . . ." (p. 69).

After this grand opening *paritta* ceremony, which was really directed to affording "protection," Buddhist monks had no other role to play in the actual launching of building operations. All such positive auspicious ritual markers were the province of brahman functionaries and palace officials, for example, the initiating of the digging of holes by pressing into the ground a gold peg with seven silver cords attached, the thread used being "spun by virgin daughters of Brahmans, daughters of tender age" (p. 70). And the planting of the posts of the throne room was done in the presence of the king himself, who came riding upon an elephant, flanked on one side by his white elephant named Airavana and on the other side by his riding horse; the officials and brahmans did obeisance to the king, and after the brahmans had "worshipped Nār after the ancient manner," the posts were planted and built up, their lotus bases wound with white cloth, their holes having been first fed with boiled rice, fresh milk, and the five kinds of gems.

From these accounts we can, I think, postulate a paradigm about the nature of the combined participation of *bhikkhu* and brahman in royal ritual, that has in fact persisted to the present day. The monks may chant *paritta* before the onset of auspicious occasions; thereafter, if they are present at all, they are there as witnesses and receivers of gifts. It is the business of the brahman in state ceremonies to commune with the gods and give priestly assistance to the king and the king's ministers who would be the prime actors in the ceremonial (e.g., the digging of the holes and the planting of the posts) (see Luce, pp. 70–71).

Luce is prompted to formulate the question of an essential and integral relationship between Buddhism and brahmanism in this way. "To distinguish Palace and Pagoda, and to claim Burmese kings were Brahmanistic in the one, and Buddhist in the other, may possibly be valid in a secular age, but cannot, I think be true of early Pagan where religion dominated everything . . ." (p. 71). Luce's own tentative answer in terms of syncretism (an overworked word) is patently unhelpful in understanding their interrelation. A better answer possibly is our thesis of the Buddhist transformation of the brahmanical formula, the change from the narrow doctrine of *rajadharma* (in which the brahman sanctifies kingship) to the larger conception of *dharmaraja* (wherein the king is the wielder of this-worldly dharma and the maintainer of society, in which brahmans serve as subordinate functionaries, and wherein he has the duty of protecting and tending the members of the sangha as the seekers of the higher truth). Under the aegis of kingship *bhikkhu* and brahman can stand to each other in a complementary relation.

3. A third feature which the Pagan kingship illustrates is the old and familiar convention that upon accession to the throne the king embarks

upon acts restorative of the religion. Thus "Kyanzittha, early in his reign, instituted a large-scale study and revision of the Tipitika, but also . . . this new recension, based on orthodox Singhalese Mahavihara models, led Burma out of the East Bengal Tantric Mahayanivan of Aniruddha's youth, and lodged it finally in the Theravada fold" (Luce, p. 61). But this does not mean Pagan's loss of influence by northern Indian (Gandharan and Mathuran) and Pala Bengal models and styles in art and architecture; but, it does mean that the use of the Sinhalese canon marks a decisive shift in the official sponsorship of doctrinal and textual interests, which in turn were to influence the themes and contents of Buddhist art.

Restorative and purifying acts concerning religion usually signify an ambitious king, who would attempt in due course expansion of his political domain. The Pagan polity we have been considering – under Aniruddha and Kyanzittha – was such a fine example of expanding political horizons, inflated boasts, and perhaps exaggerated belittling of the state of affairs before the alleged dawn of the new Buddhist age. But there is no doubt that when Aniruddha captured Thaton, he did carry off from this old Buddhist center not only the *Pitaka* texts but also all the architects and artists he could lay his hands on, to beautify his capital and to initiate there, by a decisive political act, a new cultural and religious tradition.

Sukhodaya

In early Sukhodaya we can see not only confirmation of the features of Buddhist *dharmaraja* kingship we have discerned in Pagan but also evidence of certain other nuances and relations that serve to enlarge the picture.

It would be historically incorrect – whatever the favored origin claims of the kingdom from the Thai point of view – to ignore the cultural and religious inheritance of Sukhodaya by virtue of its having been previously and intermittently a part of the Khmer empire. This inheritance had both Hindu and Buddhist components. The oldest extant Sukhodaya monument is the San Da Pa Deng (Sala Devaraksa) dating from the early twelfth century,[8] where several stone statues of Hindu deities made in the style of Angkor Wat were found (Griswold 1967, p. 2). A good Buddhist example is the *prasada* (sanctuary tower) of Wat Pra Pai Luang, decorated with bas reliefs on Buddhist themes, which is said to date from the period of Khmer suzerainty in the reign of Jayavarman VII (c. 1181–1220?); another is the Jayabuddhamahanatha stone statue of the same reign, which represents both Buddha and the king himself.

It would historically be equally inaccurate, as I have said earlier, to bypass the influence of the ancient Mon-Indian Dvaravati civilization, par-

[8] Sukhodaya was part of the Khmer empire in the reign of Suryavarman II (whose regnal years were 1113–1150). In 1150 Lavo (Lopburi) in central Siam, the principal seat of Khmer power, became independent.

ticularly in its Mon Buddhist aspect, on the constitution of Thai society. But whatever the Khmer and Mon heritage, it is clear that by the fourteenth century, especially in the reigns of Lo Tai (c. 1299–1346) and Lu Tai (1347–1374), who were the son and grandson of the illustrious Ram Kamheng, the establishment of Sinhalese Buddhism and the Sinhalese sects was celebrated and lavishly documented as giving Sukhodaya its distinctive stamp and its sense of historical antecedents. The chronicles *Jinakalamali* and the *Mulasasana* tell this story of the establishment of Sinhala sects in Rammanadesa (at Pan located near Martaban), the leader of the forest-dwelling sect having been honored by the Sinhalese king with the title of Mahasami; of the two Thai monks, Anomadassi and Sumana, who made visits to Pan to study with the Mahasami and to be reordained (their action being followed by other Thai monks); and of Sumana returning to Sukhodaya at King Lo Tai's request in order to found there the order of Sinhala monks.

The Sukhodaya evidence is eloquent on the complementary alignment of kingship and Buddhism, of king and ecclesiastical dignitary, that at an ideological level resonates into modern times.

The Tai chronicles relate stories of certain images of the Buddha being regarded as the palladia of principalities, acting as their protectors and as guardians of their prosperity. When a ruler was dethroned, he not only took the oath of vassalage to the conqueror but also surrendered his palladium and sent it to the conqueror's capital, where it was held as a hostage but also treated with respect. The most famous of the palladia was the Sihingabuddha (Sinhala Buddha), which was evidently regarded as the palladium of the kingdom of Sukhodaya. It was reputed to have been made in Ceylon and to have arrived in the kingdom in King Ram Kamheng's time.

King Ram Kamheng's stone throne was called the Manansilapatra, which stood in the "Sugar Palm Grove," and is associated with stories of the king's righteous administration: He is alleged to have sat on it when affairs of state were being transacted and to have received the homage of his vassals. The remarkable tradition is that on *uposatha* days the king invited monks to come to the palace and sit on the Manansilapatra throne to expound the dhamma. We shall see later how closely this alleged custom harks back to an Asokan tradition as reported in the *Mahavamsa* (Chapter 4). We may note here the equation: The king rules righteously in normal times, and at the stressed *uposatha* religious days he formally accepts the superiority of the Buddhist religion (and the monks who are its guardians and purveyors) over his regime.

A sequence of events reported as having taken place in Lu Tai's reign constitutes a dramatic statement of the complementary relationship between king and *mahathera*, between the royal and monkish exchange of styles. On the one hand we have the account of the manner in which King Lu Tai received in his capital the eminent Mahasami Sangharaja from

Pan and settled him in the Mango Grove of the capital – the reception was in "royal style" in that the king and his officials escorted him through the capital "from the east gate of the city to the west gate and the Mango Grove" along the principal street, the Rajamarga, which had awnings along the whole length in order to protect the dignitary from the sun, and rugs on the path so that his feet would not touch the ground (Griswold 1967, p. 36).

The king matched this event by himself, at the end of the rainy season retreat, seeking ordination as a *samanera* at the hands of the Mahasami. Griswold describes the contents of the king's inscriptions relating to the event thus: "Donning the yellow robe, he raised his hands in salute to the statue, to the copy of the Tipitaka which was kept in the palace, and to the Mahasami Sangharaja, pronouncing his resolution to attain Buddhahood, whereupon the earth quaked. The king was then ordained *samanera*, and proceeded on foot all the way to the Mango Grove. There . . . he received the *upasampada* as a *bhikkhu* the next day" (pp. 36–37).

But not unexpectedly the king's ordination was of brief duration, his reemergence on the royal path being dictated by reasons that are not uncharacteristic. Another inscription informs us that soon afterward, in 1362, the king led a military campaign eastward, probably in the direction of Nan to attain its pacification. Thus a king temporarily bends himself to the renouncer's regimen, only to reassume the ruler's "necessary" killing vocation – a cycle and passage that repeats itself in many guises in Buddhist polities. Lu Tai concluded his life around 1374, having engaged abundantly in those acts of building and repairing temples and other religious monuments that elicit the praises of the monk chroniclers.

A final feature of the close linkage between Sukhodaya kingship and Buddhism, a feature that shows a conspicuous persistence right through to our time in Thailand, is the physical adjacence of the palace and the capital's major wat. The physical layout of the capital with its cosmological implications is worthy of note. The city was surrounded by three concentric circles of earthen walls or ramparts, and it had four gates in the four cardinal points. Within the city were many Buddha statues and many *viharas*, wherein resided the *nagaravasi*, or city-dwelling monks, while outside it in the west dwelt the *arranavasi*, of forest-dwelling monks. The city-dwelling monks bore the titles of *Pu Garu*, *Nissayamutta*, *Thera*, and *Mahathera*.

I particularly want to stress the fact that in the plan of old Sukhodaya provided by Griswold, right at the inner core of the city the palace and Wat Mahadhatu (described by Griswold as "the spiritual centre of the kingdom") stood side by side, the palace to the east of the temple. Lo Tai, who undertook the rebuilding of the *cetiya* of the wat, adorning it with a "lotus bud" tower, described the completed monument in one of his inscriptions "as large and lofty, as white and beautiful, as Mount Kailasa" –

thus comparing and perhaps equating it with the abode of Shiva, the center of the Hindu cosmos, located on the top of the snow-capped Himalayas (p. 18). To the relics enshrined in the Mahadhatu, the foremost of which was a precious relic from Ceylon, were attributed miracles such as their emitting moving flashes of lightning and ejecting streams of water into the sky. In brief, we discern in the old Sukhodayan capital the architectural statement of important cosmological ideas – the palace and the temple conjoined as a duality and forming the center of the cosmos, the relics and religious objects contained by them acting as the kingdom's palladium, the city's core surrounded by outer circles, and so on.

But what of the brahmans in Sukhodaya? Griswold remarks that "a series of splendid bronze statues of Hindu gods from Sukhodaya are tangible proof that the Brahmans were active there" (p. 13). It comes as no surprise that Lu Tai, who reconsolidated the weakened kingdom left him by his father, Lo Tai, and who too was an ardent sponsor of Sinhala Buddhism, is described as restoring "the lustre of the Hindu cults which were the indispensable support of royalty and strong government. In 1349 he founded an image of Mahesvara (Siva) and one of Visnu, and placed them in the Devalayamahaksetra (Brahmin temple) in the Mango Grove, west of Sukhodaya, where all the Brahmins and ascetics were to perform the rituals of the cult in perpetuity" (p. 32). (Note the location of the brahman temple outside the city limits in comparison with the location of Wat Mahadhata side by side with the palace.) We may thus infer, that as in Pagan, the Sukhodaya kings from Ram Kamheng onward were ministered to at their courts by brahmans on matters relating to auspicious rituals, astrology and calendrical matters, law and statecraft – but we cannot say what the actual royal rites and festivals were.[9]

Having extracted as much as we can about the ideological armature of the Sukhodaya polity, we can conveniently conclude this section with a few observations that anticipate a later discussion of the actual on-the-ground political dynamics of the kingdoms in Southeast Asia. We can approach these issues by considering the implications of the Sukhodaya data relating to the rite of installation and to the layout of the kingdom and the location of its capital during its phases of contraction and expansion, during warfare and peacetime.

We are told (in Inscription IV) that after fending off the challenge of Ngua Nam Tom by defeating his forces, Lu Tai "entered the city to take supreme power in the land of Sukhodaya, as successor of his father and his grandfather; and immediately the kings living at the four cardinal points, bringing him the crown, the sacred sword Jayasri, and the white parasol,

[9] Surely Griswold (1967, p. 12) exceeds his brief when he speculates that the brahmans probably officiated at the same festivals reported by Quaritch Wales for the much later Bangkok period, for instance, the swing festival, the first ploughing, the water of allegiance rite, ceremonies of tonsure, investiture and cremation of royalty.

conferred the *abhiseka* on him with the name Brah Pada Kamraten An Srisuryavamsa Rama Mahadharmarajadhiraja";[10] in Inscription V he replaces the Khmer prefix (as represented by the first four words mentioned previously, with the Tai titles of Tao and Praya. Griswold reports that other inscriptions also refer to rulers at the cardinal points conferring the *abhiseka* and comments that "their presence is not a mere cliché; it is a magic formula." He goes on to elaborate: "Like Mount Meru surrounded by its four lesser peaks, and like the Mahadhatu with its axial and sub-axial towers, Sukhodaya had to be surrounded by a strong system of vassals in every direction, all standing on the same firm base (the cardinal points subsume the sub-cardinal and the infinity of space)." But after dazzling us with this cosmology (Lu Tai, we note, was the author after all of the cosmological treatise *Traibhumikatha*), Griswold stops the reader in his tracks or, perhaps to put it differently, shocks him out of his reverie with the blunt statement: "In plain fact, however, most of the vassals had broken away, and the rulers who gave him the *abhiseka* were perhaps no more than the governors of four cities" (p. 30).

Now the account of the coronation is noteworthy not only because it describes the princes of the quarters and not the brahman as performing the *abhiseka* (I would speculate that just as in our Pagan example cited earlier, here too brahmans were merely ritual officiants who assisted the political personages who were the primary ritual actors in the installation) but also because it gives us an insight into the highly pulsating and unstable character of the traditional polities. When Lu Tai ascended the Sukhodaya throne, the kingdom was on the verge of extinction; he had first to fight for his throne and then to regain as many of the lost vassals as possible. For instance, an inscription "seems to give a list of cities which had broken away before his accession and returned to his suzerainty between 1347 and 1357; Konti, Pra Bang, Chieng Tong (all three on the [river] Ping), Bang Pan (between Gampeng Pet and Sukhodaya), Bang Chalang . . . and some others whose names are illegible" (Griswold 1967, pp. 33–34).

The fortunes of rulers waxed and waned with respect to territorial control. To the north of Sukhodaya was the kingdom of Lan Na; farther to the northwest was Pagan; in the south was Ayutthaya, to the west Lan Chang, and farther in the southeast Angkor. The interstitial provinces under governors and principalities under petty rulers were always disputed; for example, Pra Bang (Nagara Svarga) and Gampeng Pet frequently changed hands between Sukhodaya and Ayutthaya in the middle of the fourteenth century. Furthermore, the exigencies of warfare and rebellions and the overall fissiparous nature of the polities also frequently dictated

[10] It is apposite to note that Lo Tai referred to himself in an inscription as *dharmaraja* (Griswold 1967, p. 17) and that now his son assumes the title of *mahadharmaraja;* this signifies that our use of the term "*dharmaraja* cult" in respect of Sukhodaya is not inappropriate.

that the capital of a ruler shift in physical location. Thus, for instance, when Lu Tai begun his campaign of pacification around 1362, he first went to Nan, from there eastward to Pra Sak, and finally for tactical reasons he took up residence in Kong Swe and remained there for seven years before returning to Sukhodaya. The chronicles tell us that the Sihingabuddha image, which was regarded as the palladium of the kingdom, was equally mobile. Thus a measure of sober realism ought to teach us that we must match the doctrine of the capital as the exemplary and cosmological center studded with grand temples and palaces with the fact of the moving center of improvised bamboo palaces and field camps of the warrior-king on the march or on the run, whose area of control was hotly disputed and liable to shrink or expand with the fortunes of battle.

In 1378 King Paramaraja of Ayutthaya defeated the then reigning king of Sukhodaya – Mahadharmaraja II, son of the illustrious Lu Tai – and reduced him and his kingdom to the status of a vassal. This suzerainty of Ayutthaya was more nominal than actual, as, for example, around 1390. But by 1438 the Sukhodayan provinces were decisively and irrevocably incorporated into the kingdom of Ayutthaya. Our discussion of Thai kingship and polity and its linkage with Buddhism must therefore now move on to the Ayutthayan stage.

Ayutthaya

The Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya, which in due course dominated and engulfed the Sukhodayan polity, was founded in 1350 in the lower Chao Phraya basin. Ayutthaya grew to be powerful and prosperous; it maintained close religious association with Sinhalese Buddhism; but it also took a stance different from its predecessor's. While in the Sukhodaya era the Siamese attempted to take a deliberate posture of contrast to things Khmer (the Angkor civilization then being the dominant one in the region), especially in matters relating to political organization and art, in the Ayutthaya period they openly imitated and assimilated Khmer customs and practices. The irony is that the Thai were politically opposed to the Khmers (and vice versa); they virtually made Angkor untenable through military invasions and made the Khmers abandon their monumental capital in 1431. But at the same time, the Thai borrowed from the Khmers many features of their administrative and political institutions, art forms, system of writing, and vocabulary, especially that associated with honorific court language. Most importantly, they borrowed the major features of the Khmer royal cult and imported Cambodian brahman priests to conduct its rites. This then is how Thailand from the Ayutthayan era onward has come to have Theravada Buddhism as the religion of its king and people and also a traditional royal cult, at which court brahmans have always officiated, a cult that apart from its ideological basis in early Buddhism, is compounded of notions derived from Sinhalese Buddhism, of whatever

features of the *dharmaraja* cult were inherited from Sukhodaya, and of a dominant input from the Cambodian *devaraja* cult. In one sense Ayutthaya became the true heir of Khmer civilization as manifested by its elaboration of divine kingship molded to Buddhist canons, by its transformation of Khmer and U Thong art styles, and by its literary efflorescence.

While it is clear that Ayutthaya took over an unabashed Khmer-oriented *devaraja* conception of the polity, it is difficult to assess how much of the early Pagan and Sukhodaya traditions were also incorporated. It is evident that the *dhammarajika* conception of state and kingship was primarily of Burmese inspiration. As Lehman has pointed out to me:

> There are excellent reasons why the *dhammarajika* system, which in Southeast Asia began at Pagan in Old Burma, continued on in the Burmese-Mon sphere but not to the east. The need for rulership that paralleled that of the Hindu gods (in this case under *Indra*) and incorporated it as a necessary condition of an orderly kingdom functioning as a context of Buddhism, was met by the Burmese tradition with its official *nat* cult. The king (at least from the time of Kyanzittha) is a *dhammaraja*, like a Buddha; Indra (*sakka*, Burmese *thagya-min:*) is mirrored, similarly, in the head of the official *nat* corporation, the *mahagiri nat* (*min: mahagiri/min:* = king). The eastern *theravada* countries never had this parallel "rulership," so that the king had himself to symbolise rulership of the gods and that of Buddhas, so that the realm incorporated, in its concentration of powers the *tiloka*, the three worlds of gods, Buddhas and men.

It would appear that Sukhodaya's experimentation with the *dhammarajika* system was not full blown, although as I have said before Lo Tai and Lu Tai erected Vishnu temples. Again although Ram Kamheng's inscription refers to a deity (*phi devata*) – Pra Kapung ("holy and exalted"), who dwelt on a mountain near the capital, was superior to all other *phi* in the land, and was considered the protector of the kingdom – yet it does not seem to be the case that Sukhodaya had a systematized official *nat* cult on the Burmese scale.[11] Ayutthaya, in any case, shows no evidence of an *official nat* (or *phi*) cult. However, since brahmans as court functionaries and officiants at auspicious ceremonies were a feature of early Pagan and Sukhodaya, their presence in Ayutthaya should in part be seen as a continuation of Sukhodayan traditions. Nor should we belittle the influence of Mon-Pali legal conceptions embodied in the *dhammathat* literature on the Thai legal system: We shall return to this later.

Nevertheless, our thesis is that Ayutthaya's political conceptions owe more to Cambodia than to Sukhodaya or Pagan. There are certain geopolitical factors that encouraged this alignment. While it is true that Vijayabahu I of Ceylon captured his throne with Aniruddha of Pagan's help, yet by the middle of the twelfth century Pagan's relations with

[11] The inscription said that as long as Pra Kapung received homage and ritual offerings regularly from the king, the kingdom would remain stable and prosperous. Griswold comments that Pra Kapung was "the national divinity" and that "On the magical level he maintained discipline among all the territorial sprites of the land, including those of the newly conquered places, and so kept the kingdom united" (1967, p. 9).

Parakrama Bahu I had deteriorated, owing mostly to trade rivalries, which culminated in a war around A.D. 1165 in which the Sinhala king emerged victorious, with his armada making successful incursions into Pagan and Bassein. The balance of power with respect to maritime interests crystallized in such a fashion that Pagan allied with the Cholas of southern India (who were the perennial invaders of the Sinhala kingdoms) in opposition to the Sinhalese alliance with Cambodia. As Luce puts it: "Kyanzittha and his line, though deeply indebted to Ceylon for Buddhist texts of the Tipitika had allied themselves with the Mons and the Colas, while Parakrama Bahu sought alliance with the Cambojans. They were, in fact, in opposite blocs. One object of the latter, it seems . . . was to break the hold of Colas and Burmans on the narrows of the Malay Peninsula, or attest to dispute their claims to control it" (1969, p. 125).

We have already described the manner in which Sukhodaya, especially under Lo Tai and Lu Tai, assented to and took pride in receiving an infusion of Sinhalese Pali Buddhism. After Sukhodaya's decline, northern Thailand – this time Chiangmai – was the venue for another strong infusion of Sinhalese Buddhism when in 1423 a body of 25 monks from Chiangmai, together with 8 monks from Cambodia, went to Ceylon to receive ordination anew. The Siamese monks returned in 1425, were established in Wat Pa Deng, two miles west of Chiangmai, founded the sect of Sinhala Bhikkhus, and went on missions to the north. Ratanapanna, the author of *Jinakalamali*, belonged to this famous sect. The year 1475 witnessed the great council held in Chiangmai for the revising of Pali sculptures.

Ayutthaya also participated in this revival of Pali Buddhism to which certain conceptions of kingship and polity were integral; and its sympathy for the Sinhalese connection also helped strengthen its inclination toward Khmer political conceptions of the *devaraja* type (which were by no means incompatible with Pali Buddhist canonical ideas).

While Khmer civilization was (at least from A.D. 1000 onward) never monolithically brahmanical and always had Buddhist components – we have already referred to the evidence of Khmer-Buddhist monuments inherited by Sukhodaya – it is probable that Ayutthaya at this point in history found itself in a position to transmit Theravada Buddhism to the Khmers with new intensity. Clearly, behind the overt political antagonism between the two peoples there was real symbiosis. Whereas Sukhodaya, being an infant up-and-coming polity, needed to differentiate itself from its giant imperial neighbor, Ayutthaya as a full-blown and powerful entity could deal with Angkor as a mature equal.

Let us now examine the question of the major historical streams making their confluence in Ayutthaya by way of legend.

The Jinakalamali *Legend*

We have already referred to the *Jinakalamali*, composed in the early sixteenth century by a Thai monk who belonged to the Sinhala sect, as an

example of a structured view of the Buddhist past, leading to the present culmination in the Siamese Buddhist polity, particularly the writer's own kingdom of Chiangmai. It is apposite to return to that text in order to decipher the implications of its most important legend.

According to the legend, King Anuruddha of Pagan, full of religious zeal and eager to obtain accurate copies of the Pali scriptures, went to Ceylon on his magic steed, his escort following by boat. After copying the *Tipitaka*, he returned with two sets of the text loaded in one boat but sent two other sets together with the image of the Emerald Buddha, fashioned by the monk Nagasena, in another boat. The former boat arrived in Pagan safely while the latter, caught in a storm, lost its course, finally reaching Angkor Thom, the Khmer capital. The Pagan king recovered the texts but not the image (Luce 1969, Vol. 1, pp. 38–39). It was the Chiangmai kingdom that subsequently became heir to both the texts and the image, the latter becoming the palladium of successive kingdoms.

There are two major implications to this legend. The first is that the Sinhalese texts and image became separated and went to two different locations – Pagan and Angkor; and the Thai polity in ultimately receiving the two sets of objects from these locations becomes the meeting point and the heir and unifier of two cultural streams emanating from Pagan and Cambodia. It is historically a more complete civilization, just as it is also the possessor of the more complete religion. The second implication has been aptly stated by F. Reynolds:

> What is being expressed here . . . is the perception on the part of those who formulated the legends that, prior to the coming of the Thai, the glory and power of the faith represented by the image on the one side, and the authentic Dhamma represented by the scriptures on the other, had become separated. It is thus extremely significant that King Tilok, who established the image in a very honored position in his capital of Chiangmai, also sponsored a Council for the purpose of reestablishing an authentic version of the Pali canon. And it is also very significant that during the Bangkok period, this same image was given a place of great honor, a full copy of the scriptures was placed within the precincts of the temple which housed it where incidentally it still remains. What is being said here . . . is that . . . the Thai nation has become the bearer and the protector of the one truly authentic form of Buddhist religion.[12]

Both implications, one saying that the Thai religio-political culture is the junction and union of two traditions and the other saying that it is Thailand's destiny that it be the receiver and protector of the pure and complete religion, supplement each other. Finally, we may also regard this legend as not only describing the credentials of sixteenth-century northern Thailand but also of its southern and more powerful neighbor of Ayutthaya.

Obviously, Mon-Pagan, Sinhalese, and Khmer influences have converged in Ayutthaya and achieved a complex reworking there. Let us take each

[12] Stated in an unpublished essay "Civil Religion in Thai History."

stream in turn, commenting on certain select features that will serve to illuminate the Siamese configuration.

The Mon-Pagan Legal Traditions

The Mon-Pali influence on Thai kingship can be seen, for instance, in the legal literature called the *dhammasatham* (Thai, *thammasat*), which passed from the Mons to the Burmese and from them again to the Thai of the Ayutthayan period.

The Mon transformation of brahmanical legal texts and of the Indian creation myth in which Manu plays a central part is worthy of close scrutiny, for it tells us how under Buddhism law is disaggregated from a sacerdotal embedding and takes shape under the aegis of kingship, thereby reiterating the central tenets of the Buddhist genesis myth contained in the *Agganna Suttanta* (Chapter 2).

While the Mons who were committed to Pali Buddhism appear to have developed their legal tradition around the seventh century, it was much later, during the Pagan period (twelfth century onward) that the Mons, apparently at the request of Burmese kings, first composed Pali books, equivalent to the Hindu Sanskritic dharmashastra. These Pali treatises were called *dhammasattham*.

Lingat (1950) describes the Mon transformation of the brahmanical texts as follows:

> In composing this literature, Mon writers took for their model Hindu *dharmasastras*, and this is why many provisions of the new codes may be found in the Indian Manu code or other similar works. But *dhammasatthams* are quite different from Sanskrit *dharmasastras*. First of all their authors left aside every matter which, in Hindu codes, was connected with Brahmanical religion or traditions. They were Buddhist people, and their codes were first to be applied to Buddhist people. . . . Consequently the aims of *dhammasatthams* was very small compared with that of *dharmasastras*. They dealt only with the eighteen types of lawsuits expounded by Manu and used them as headings of chapters. The substance of law was not entirely taken from Hindu codes. They introduced, as was natural, a few customary rules prevalent among the indigenous population . . . (p. 14).

The result was that the new legal literature was completely deprived of religious support and was therefore a secular code. But the Mon authors wanted the name of Manu, associated in all Indian-influenced nations with the origin of law, to give legitimacy to their work. Thus a myth of a Buddhist Manu in the service of King Mahathammata, first ruler of the world inhabitants, was forged – but of this more later.

The reader is directed to the myth of world creation and the role of Manu the lawgiver at the beginning of *Laws of Manu*[13] and to compare it with the origin myth of the world, especially that part relating to King

[13] See Chapter 3.

Mahathammata and his minister Manu, as reported in Richardson (1896, pp. 1–25).

The shift in myth revolves around a central point: In Hindu society the brahman is superior to the king, legitimates his power, and interprets law (dharma); in the Mon-Burmese (and Siamese) version, it is the king who, if not the maker of laws, is still the fountain of justice and a *bodhisattva* himself; and the brahman works for the Buddhist king as his subordinate functionary. Herein lies a basic difference in the ideological armatures of Indian and Southeast Asian polities.

In the Indian myth that we have already examined we are told that the self-existent (*svayambhu*) created the universe; and in order to settle his duties clearly and those of other castes according to their order, wise Manu, "sprung from the self-existent," composed institutes of the sacred law, which, we may note, cover all fields of social order – castes, sacraments, marriage, inheritance, occupations, and, most important, "the whole duty of a King and the manner of deciding lawsuits." Furthermore, Manu's successors are to be found in the *brahmana* who sprang from the Brahman's mouth, the first-born and the possessor of the Veda.

Now consider the Burmese version, especially the relation between King Mahathammata and Manu. Mahathammata was elected the first king by the people because he was a *para-laung* (an embryo Buddha), "just in all his proportions beyond all men." He was given the title of *yaza* "because he was capable of instructing men according to the laws"; he was also the lineal descendant of the Sun, who habitually performs works of the purest benevolence.

Compared with this royal figure of divine proportions, Menoo (Manu) was born a cowherd, who because of his flair for adjudicating disputes was made the king's minister while still a child. But when Manu gave a wrong decision over the ownership of a cucumber, he decided to become an ascetic in search of infallible truth, practicing both meditation and austerities, which in classical belief enable a man to gain special spiritual powers. Thus Manu became *yathe* or a *rahan*, and "here [at the stone cave in the hill near Mandagini Lake] he remained subduing his lust and other passions" and thereby ascended to the heaven and there found the *dhammathat* laws engraved on the boundary wall of the solar system. He brought back the divine laws to his king. Thus Manu introduced more just and perfect laws into a situation in which the law of the king and his legal procedures and institutions, however imperfect, had preexisted. The contrast with the Indian version is remarkable here.

In the sum then the Burmese myth (which is also to be found in Sri Lanka and in Siam, reflecting a transformation common to Theravada Buddhist countries) makes two points about the relation between king and brahman:

1. Mahathammata, although elected king, is at the same time an embryo Buddha and an embodiment of justice.

2. Menoo is a cowherd boy-wonder who, because of his judicial acumen, is appointed minister by the king and who then, by the practice of austerities and meditation, discovers the divine writ and brings it back to the world in his capacity as a wise ascetic and holy man in the service of his king.

The actual details of the variant versions of Burmese traditional law do not concern us here.[14] Siamese traditional law, as revised and put together (the Law of the Three Seals) after the recovery from the destruction of Ayutthaya by the first Chakkri king, Rama I, shares the same Manu myth[15] and various features of substantive law. But it is pertinent to note an important duality in the Burmese and Thai views of the relationship of king to law.

In one sense the Buddhist version in asserting that a benevolent king is the fountain of justice is really affirming the role of kingship as the expression of dharma and as the ordering principle of society (inefficient causality). In another sense individual kings as actors on the world's stage, as wielders of authority and force, are also efficient causal agents of actions whose relation to dharma is problematic. Actual kings act with different propensities according to their karma, and the success or failure and the lengthy or brief duration of their reigns indicate the dialectical relation between their fund of merit and the effects of karma. Indeed, as Lingat (1950) demonstrates, while in Burma the notion of *dhammasatham* as absolute moral law was considered prior to and kept separate from *rajasatham* (the individual acts and practical applications of law by the king), in Thailand there was a further evolution of *dhammasatham* in the direction of positive law whereby royal decisions were directly connected with *dhammasatham* rules. This amalgamation of *rajasatham* with *dhammasatham* that accepts the principle that the king can himself legislate because he embodies dharma is no doubt historically connected with the development of powerful and stable dynasties.

The Sinhalese Traditions

We can next take up the question of Sinhalese inputs. The Sinhalese (and Mon-) Pali traditions in many ways reflect the assertions of those doctrinal *suttas* of early Buddhism, which we examined in some detail in Chapter 4 (e.g., the *Mahapadana, Lakkahana,* and *Cakkavattisihanada Suttas*).

14 See Tambiah in Goody and Tambiah (1973) for a discussion.

15 Thus, for instance, the Burmese document called *Manugye,* written around 1752 (first translated by Richardson in 1847) and the Siamese Law of the Three Seals promulgated by Rama I a few decades later in the early years of the nineteenth century shared the same myth that placed Manu, the discoverer of divine law, as the minister and servant of the first elected king, Mahathammata, who was considered an embryo Buddha who performed works of the purest benevolence. Thus the Hindu lawgiver who as first man sprang from the "self-existent" and legislated even for kings is transformed and subordinated in the Buddhist version to a discoverer of law in the service of a benevolent king who is the fountain of justice.

Rahula in summing up the doctrinal position in Theravada Buddhism (especially as understood in Sinhalese circles) confirms this continuity, although we might not altogether agree with his secular/spiritual distinction:

> The Buddha and the Cakkavatti-Emperor are regarded almost equally in the suttas. The *Lakkahana-sutta* of the Digha-nikaya maintains that the Buddha and the Cakkavatti are both endowed with the thirty-two marks of the Great Man (Mahapurisa-lakkhana). If a person who has these thirty-two marks lived this worldly life he became a Cakkavatti; if he left home, he became a Buddha. The *Anguttara-nikaya* declares that they are both *acchariyamanussa,* "wonderful men" who are born "for the good of the many," and they both are *thuparaha,* "worthy of monuments." While the Buddha holds sway over the entire spiritual world, the Cakkavatti is the ideal supreme ruler of the secular world. . . . Hence we find that the Buddha has advised bhikkhus to follow the instructions of the king (1956, p. 66).

Similarly, the Buddhist conception of kingship as understood in Sukhodayan and Ayutthayan times, and later into the nineteenth century, can be stated in terms of the simple equation:

Cakkavatti (universal emperor) = *Bodhisattva* (Buddha-to-be).

One strand in the Buddhist tradition stressed the benevolent aspect of the dharma of kingship, and it is magnificently repeated by Siamese kings. Thus Traibhumikatha says this of himself in a Sukhodaya inscription echoing the prescriptions in the *suttas* and other pronouncements such as the "Ten Duties of the King": "This king reigned by observing the ten royal precepts. He knows how to take pity on all his subjects. If he sees the rice of others, he does not covet it; if he sees the wealth of others, he is not annoyed by it. . . . The reason why he represses his heart and quells his spirit and does not become angry . . . is that *he* has the desire to become a Buddha, and the desire to lead all creatures beyond the ocean of sorrows of transmigration" (Coedès 1968, p. 221).

Since Sinhalese Pali Buddhism made its impact on Thai principalities from about the thirteenth century onward, it is pertinent to inquire what the Sinhalese conception of the relation between kingship and Buddhism was. Fortunately, Rahula's discussion of this topic is apposite, especially his documentation of the ideas prevalent in Ceylon between the tenth and twelfth centuries.[16]

It appears that the king was regarded as the lay head of Buddhism and the protector of the *sasana.* A tenth-century inscription by Mahinda IV declares that a *kshatriya* becomes a king "for the purpose of defending the alms-bowl and the robe of Buddha." So respected was the king that words originally used in reference only to the Buddha and *arahants* were applied to Sinhalese kings (e.g., *pirinivi* for the death of a king). The conception that the king should not only be a Buddhist but was indeed a

[16] *History of Buddhism in Ceylon,* Ch. 5.

bodhisattva became well established in the same century as is attested by the Jetavana inscription of Mahinda IV (Rahula 1956, p. 62). The same inscription also made the counter- but complementary assertion that it was the sangha that actually conferred the kingship. The synthesis of the thesis and antithesis, the relation between the claims of kingship and of Buddhism may be summed up as follows: The king is a *bodhisattva* on whom the sangha bestowed kingship in order that he may defend the bowl and the robe.

Thus there was enough precedent for Siamese kings to claim the status not of Buddha (though some did claim this achievement) but of the Buddha-to-be. It was common practice for kings to take the title of *bodhisattva* and even sometimes to identify themselves with *maitreya*, the Buddha-to-come.

There was also a corresponding change in the application of cosmological conceptions to Buddhist kings. Whereas in the Hindu kingdoms the representation of Mount Meru was in the form of a temple, in Buddhist polities of the Theravada kind the palace complex itself (containing the royal shrine) became the center of the universe. Furthermore, the Hindu equation of the king with the god Indra (*Satapatha Brahmana* V. 4.3.7) was also adopted by the Buddhists, and the king's palace was easily identified with Indra's palace on the top of Mount Meru. Thus we see that the Buddhist conception of king could and did lead to more ambitious heights than was possible in classical Hinduism.

One of the most important developments in the close ideological relation between Buddhism and kingship is the equation of the Buddha's relic or representation in statue with the regalia of kingship and state. In Ceylon the tooth relic was a symbol that expressed the idea that political sovereignty was incapable of being conceived apart from its affiliation with Buddhism, its sponsorship and protection. As we have already noted, in Thailand the same role was and is played by the Emerald Buddha statue. These relics (*dhatu*), statues, and sacred jewels contain fertilizing, prosperity-conferring qualities; in them virtue, merit, and power are combined.

I would go even further to argue that at the highest level the fusion of kingship with *bodhisattva*-ship, of political sovereignty with Buddhist affiliation, makes the king himself in certain contexts a ritual officiant of central importance. The most telling evidence for this is that just as in Ceylon the temple where the tooth relic was housed was part of the palace complex (Hocart 1931; also Rahula 1956), so in Thailand is the Wat Phra Keo (which houses the Emerald Buddha) part of the grand palace complex. Furthermore, the changing of the ornaments and clothes of the Emerald Buddha three times a year is performed by the king in person, just as King Kirti Sri Raja Sinha in eighteenth-century Ceylon revived the perahera procession and gave pride of place to the tooth relic, and in the words of the *Mahavamsa:* ". . . when everything was thus

made ready, the ruler of men reverently placed the splendid golden casket containing the relics of the body of the Buddha on the howdah, and caused the flower-strewers to strew flowers thereon, thick as rain" (quoted in Copleston, 1892). Wales (1931) provides further evidence of the Siamese king's ritual eminence: In the coronation ceremony, though the brahman priests perform other functions, it is the king alone who publicly places the crown on his head with his own hands (p. 42).[17]

The fact that, at the highest level, politics and religion were combined in the person of the king does not mean that at another level politics (king and state) were not separated from religion (*sangha*). The relationship between the polity and *sangha* is complex, and will concern us in detail later.

The Royal Cult in Cambodia

Apart from the Sinhalese and Mon-Pali traditions of kingship, Ayutthayan conceptions were also strongly influenced by a third stream stemming from Cambodia. The year A.D. 802 marks an important change in the royal cult of Angkor and also in the reciprocal relation between brahman priest and *kshatriya* king. In that year was performed the *chakravartin* (universal emperor) ceremony for Jayavarman II by a brahman priest (from Janapada), whereby the Khmer kingdom not only separated itself from Javanese domination and declared its independence but the king was also proclaimed *devaraja*, the god-king. "Hiranyadama prepared the ritual for the royal linga . . . bestowing upon the king Chakravartin power, of which the linga was the symbol, a sort of ceremony establishing the divine right of the king" (Briggs 1951, p. 89).

Jayavarman thus established the cult of the *devaraja* as the official religion of the kingdom, though ideas of divine kingship probably existed from earlier times. Whereas previously in Funan and Chenla there had been worship of the *Sivalinga* on top of the mountain as guaranteeing the polity, the dramatic innovation of the *devaraja* cult now was *the identification of the king with the god Siva, a sort of apothesis of the king during his life.* In other words, the king represented the duality of divine and secular power in one person; he became lord of the universe and he arrogated the virtues of both brahman and *kshatriya.*

The historical and religious significance of this new development has been summed up by Coedès:

> In the Indianized kingdoms of Southeast Asia, the Hindu cults developed even further a tendency they had already shown in India and eventually became royal cults. This was particularly true of the worship of Siva. The essence of royalty or, as some texts say, the "moi subtil" of the king, was supposed to reside in a linga placed on a pyramid in the center of the royal city which was

[17] Furthermore, Leonowens reports that King Mongkut alone ascended the steps of the Royal Chapel and lighted tapers and made offerings of flowers (Wales, p. 43).

itself supposed to be the axis of the world. This miraculous linga, a sort of palladium of the kingdom, was thought to have been obtained from Siva *through a Brahman who delivered it to the king, founder of the dynasty* [italics mine]. The communion between the king and the god through the medium of a priest took place on the sacred mountain which could be either natural or artificial (1968, p. 101).

It is clear that in this royal cult in which the king was divinized, the officiating brahman priest, the *purohita*, became a vehicle or medium for the transfer of the god's power to the king. This represents a subtle change in his relation to the king when compared to the classical Indian formulation of the relation between the brahman and the *kshatriya*. We have already seen that the Hindu formulation posited that moral authority was incarnated in the brahman, temporal power in the king; that while spiritually the priest was superior, materially he was dependent on the king – a relation that can be summarized as B/K.

Now with the *devaraja* cult in Cambodia, we clearly see a reversal of this relation to K/B: It is the king who becomes divinized, and the priest is a vehicle for this union between god and king. Dumont (1962) has argued that the Indian formulation represented a "secularization" of kingship because the spiritual power rested with the brahman; in Southeast Asia we have a transformation to the prototypical situation of divine kingship.

Although in Angkor the brahman priest had thus become subordinate to the divine king, the brahman-*kshatriya* cooperation was still important in the polity (as it was in India). Soon after Jayavarman's *chakravartin* ceremony, it was established that his royal chaplain (*hotar*) Sivakaivalya would become the chief priest of the *devaraja* cult (*purohita*) and that this office would reside in his family line – and apparently it did for two and one-half centuries (Briggs 1951, p. 82). In other words, together with a new dynastic line was founded a complementary priestly line.

Offices of the chaplain of the king (*hotar*), of *purohita*, and of tutor (*guru*) of the royal princes were reserved for the great priestly families, who were often related by blood or marriage to the royal family. In fact, a most interesting social feature of this time was the intermarriage of court brahmans and the royal family. Briggs reports a feature of this intermarriage that is almost too good to be true: "Many of the hereditary sacerdotal families, which furnished ministers, as well as priests, to the kings until the time of Suriyavarman I at least, were descended from the wives of Jayavarman II."

If one allows one's anthropological imagination free rein, one may view this as a reversal of the previous state of affairs in the Funan period, when brahmans cohabited with princesses to produce *kshatriya* kings; now it appears that the nonreigning descendants of kings became the court priests. (The royal family being polygynous, the number of princes who could not reign nor be given high political office must have been large.)

Majumdar (1963) also refers to the close intermarriage between the secular and spiritual heads and, more importantly, to the nonreigning royal sons and other males of the royal family becoming high priests and *acharyas* (p. 210). There is no better evidence than this for the argument that, at this stage, the king took precedence over priest but at the same time their relationship was close, as close as marriage.

From now on, kingship in Angkor becomes the focus of greater and greater elaboration and the claimant of ever-increasing extraordinary powers. By the end of the tenth century, especially from the time of Rajendravarman II (in the latter half of the century), the *devaraja* cult had developed further to crystallize around the apotheosis of dead kings and their worship. The pyramid temple in which the *linga* resided became the mausoleum of the king who built it. This meant that in each succeeding reign the *purohita* had to consecrate a new *devaraja* for which a new pyramid temple had to be created – a religious necessity that underlies the proliferation of pyramid temples in Angkor.

The elaborations in the cult of the *devaraja*[18] corresponded with Angkor's period of greatness. (But the syndrome was not unique and peculiar to Angkor; it was more or less replicated in most of the Indianized states of the time.) In our discussion of the galactic polity in Southeast Asia in the following chapters we shall see how cosmological symbolism pervaded political structure, architectural layout, and court life. The Hindu or Buddhist cosmology of Mount Meru and the concentric circles of continents and oceans informed the physical layout of capitals. Similar considerations determined the number of queens, ministers, and provincial administrators, as, for instance, evidenced in the medieval Mon kingdom in which the god Indra, the 4 *lokapala*, and the 28 attendant deities served as the model for administrative divisions (Shorto 1963). Javanese rulers considered themselves incarnations of Vishnu in the role of maintainer and restorer of order. For example, King Wijaya called himself in the Butak inscription of 1294 "the protector of the world who fell from heaven" (Schrieke 1957, pp. 9, 85). Such facts indicate the climax of the cult of kingship, when the king was represented as god on earth, the pivot of the polity, and his palace and capital a microcosm of the cosmological universe.

There is one last phase in the cult of the king in Angkor before its eclipse and its alleged shift to Hinayana Buddhism. This phase relates to the period when the Cambodian kings sponsored Mahayana Buddhism in their state religion.[19] Jayavarman VII's reign (1181–c. 1215) is an illustration. But the new elaboration hardly tampered with the basic principles of the established cult, for it was ardently devoted to the elaborate pro-

[18] Although in the reign of Suriyavarman II (the builder of Angkor Wat) Sivaism was displaced by Vaishnavite worship and the king was called *vishnuraja* (rather than *devaraja*), there was no essential change in the form of the royal cult.

[19] As previously stated, in Angkor Buddhist components were always fused with Hindu forms.

pitiation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. In fact this cult of Lokesvara combined with the previous Mahesvara Sivaism (devoted to *linga* worship) to produce a notion of royalty – the *Buddharaja* – which was both a continuation and a transformation of the *devaraja* concept. (Further afield, Indonesia provides us with dramatic examples of the Mahayanist identification of Buddha with Siva (Siva-Buddha) and with Vishnu (Vishnu-Buddha.)[20]

Jayavarman who considered himself the living Buddha was apotheosized as Jayabuddha. His greatest architectural achievement was the Bayon, dedicated to himself as a funerary temple, with its towers of the four-faced Lokesvara represented in his likeness. *The cult of the* Buddharaja, *did not do away with the brahmans,* nor did their brahmanical court rites diminish. This last phase in Cambodia contains a pattern of division of labor between monk and brahman whose unfolding is best seen in Thailand, beginning with the kingdom of Ayutthaya which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had a dual character: On the one hand it was committed to Theravada Pali Buddhism, and on the other it also borrowed heavily from Angkor, especially with respect to court rituals, and imported brahmans from there (and from India) to conduct them.[21]

[20] See for example Schrieke (1957), pp. 86–88.

[21] The relation between the *bhikkhu* and the brahman in Thailand will be dealt with in a separate publication. For examples of the participation of both brahmans and *bhikkhus* in royal rites see Wales (1931) and Gerini (1895).

7. The Galactic Polity

In this chapter we have to make the transition from the rhetoric of grand religio-politico-moral conceptions of kingship to their implementation and and realization in historical circumstances. But this transition is best made through an intervening term that mediates and unites theory and practice, namely, certain cosmological cum topographical models of the polity that were employed as blueprints of political form.

Cosmological Topography

It is the concept of mandala that prompted me to coin the label "galactic polity." According to a common Indo-Tibetan tradition, mandala is composed of two elements – a core (*manda*) and a container or enclosing element (*-la*). A frequent manifestation of mandala is in the form of designs and diagrams painted on textiles or drawn with powdered colors. Again at quite different levels of symbolization and arrangement great architectural monuments like Borobudur, Bayon and Angkor Wat have been called mandala (Figures 7.4*a* and 7.4*b*); the human body has been likened to a mandala; and cosmological schemes of various sorts in both tantric Hinduism and Buddhism have been referred to as mandala (e.g., Vajravarman's elucidation of "the receptacle *mandala*").[1] Most interestingly, Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* also used mandala to discuss the spatial configuration of friendly and enemy states from the point of view of a particular kingdom; that is, mandala as a geopolitical concept. All these examples share the basic format of a central image and surrounding entities, the simplest being quinary grouping. As Tucci informs us: "A *mandala* . . . is divided into five sections, while on the four sides of a central image, or symbol, are disposed, at each of the cardinal points, four other images or symbols" (p. 49).

There is for Southeast Asia a rich and extensive literature on the geometrical and topographical "formulas" (mandala) usually fused with cosmological principles, which provided the design for the constitution of communities that may range from clan or lineage-based segmentary so-

[1] See, for example, Tucci (1971); Mus (1935, 1936); Kautilya (Shamasastry, ed., 1960).

cieties practicing slash-and-burn agriculture to more complex centralized polities of valley-based sedentary rice cultivators.[2]

It is possible to see Indian and Chinese precedents, Hindu and Buddhist sources, for these ideas, but one thing is clear: They could have taken root in Southeast Asia only because indigenous conditions and social practices favored their incorporation or because they represented a "literate" culture's formalization of images already experienced and emergent in local conditions, a convergence that makes the quick and ready borrowing of classical Hindu-Buddhist charters readily understandable.

Let us begin our investigation with the elementary geometric constructs usually referred to as the five- and nine-unit systems. Of the quinary form Shorto has noted: "This much can be said: all along the migratory routes from South China through the basins of the Irawaddy and Menam to Indonesia, we find universe and state intermittently conceptualized in terms of a cruciform structure of five points, the 'five regions' of China and 'sacred five' of Java" (1963, p. 591).

It is to the Indonesian region that we must turn to see telling employment of the quincunical construct in both segmentary-tribal and centralized polities. The concept of *mantjapat* (literally "five-four") has various usages, "but in the territorial sphere it denoted a grouping of four village tracts surrounding a fifth one, and notionally located east, south, west and north of it . . . the *mantjapat* was also the locus of markets held in each village in rotation on a five-day cycle" (pp. 582–583).

The nine-unit system (*mantja-lima*) by a further extension of this radial geometry is derived by locating four more, but lesser, cardinal points in between (and usually farther away from) the major cardinal points, thus giving eight entities surrounding the center (Figure 7.2*a*).

One could give examples at random of their use at local and metropolitan levels: in Minangkabau, landownership disputes required for their

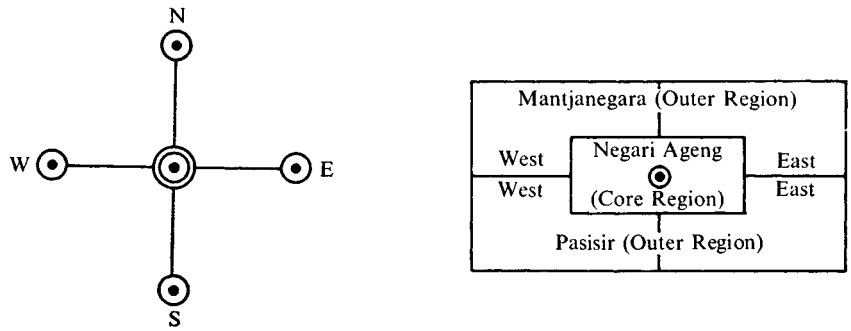


Figure 7.1. (a) The *mantjapat*. (b) The Mataram state: a five-unit system through successive bipartitions. *Source:* After Schrieke.

[2] See de Jong (1951), Schrieke (1957), Mus (1935), Heine-Geldern (1942), Shorto (1963), Moertono (1968), Wheatley (1971).

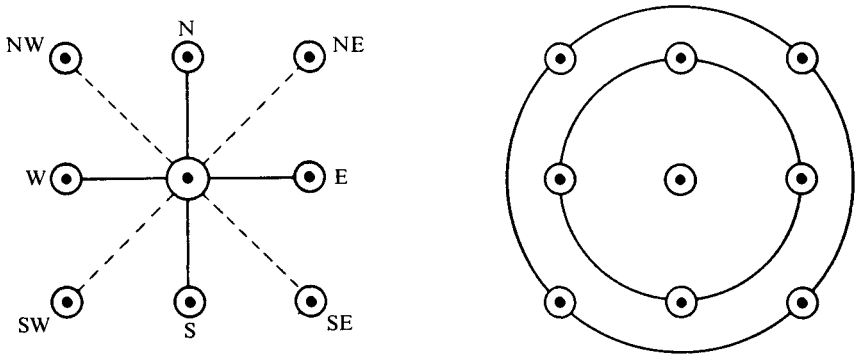


Figure 7.2. (a) Nine-unit system: radial pattern. (b) The king's council: two concentric circles.

settlement the unanimous testimony of the *pasupadan*, the heads of the families owning the four surrounding plots (de Jong 1952). *Mantjapat* could describe the headman's council at the village level (in the same sense of the concept *panchayat* in village India) as well the king's council of four senior ministers. The *mantja-lima* (five-five) could apply to a group of eight officials who sat in two concentric circles round the king, the *mantjapat* in the inner ring to the east, south, west and north of him, and the outer four at the intermediate points (Figure 7.2*b*).

These geometric and cosmological constructs are employed in varying contexts ranging from acephalous segmentary systems in which clan structure and their territorial distribution coincide, through hierarchical polities built on the linkage of clans (composed of internally ranked lineages), to full-blown centralized polities of the greatest complexity, clans and lineages being ordinarily absent, as among the Buddhist polities of Southeast Asia. Because of this distribution, there are no prima facie grounds for asserting that the impulsions of slash-and-burn agriculture, or rice cultivation, or the logistical constraints of "primitive" sociopolitical organization directly dictate the generation of these models.[3] A more complex approach is necessary to understand the logic of their use.

The Negri Sembilan state uses the nine-unit system composed of clans, chiefs, and territorial divisions (de Jong 1952; Shorto 1963). Sri Menanti is the ruler's own seat; he is elected by the chiefs of four large districts, Sungei Ujong, Jelebu, Johol, and Rembau; and each of these is separated from Sri Menanti by a smaller district that is called its verandah (*serambi*). The arrangement approximates to that of the *mantja-lima*, a center surrounded by two concentric circles of four. The electors are summoned to

[3] But how they fit with facts on the ground, how they order the religio-politico-economic facts, and what contradictions are confronted by these models *vis-à-vis* ongoing political and economic processes and developments are another matter as we shall see.

the ceremony by clan chiefs drawn from the verandah districts, and on their way they lodge for the night in several verandahs. There is a correlation between districts and distribution of clans, of which there are 12 altogether, and ideally 4 of them are found in each outlying district. The nine-unit constellation represented by the Negri Sembilan polity is expressed in Figures 7.3*a* and 7.3*b*, and we see that it differs from the standard representation in Figure 7.2*a* in placing the lesser four units in between the center and its four major satellites.

Now the same kind of geometric construction underlies another kind of characterization that emphasizes dual classification and bifurcation or bipartition.[4] For instance, Schrieke described the realm of Mataram in early

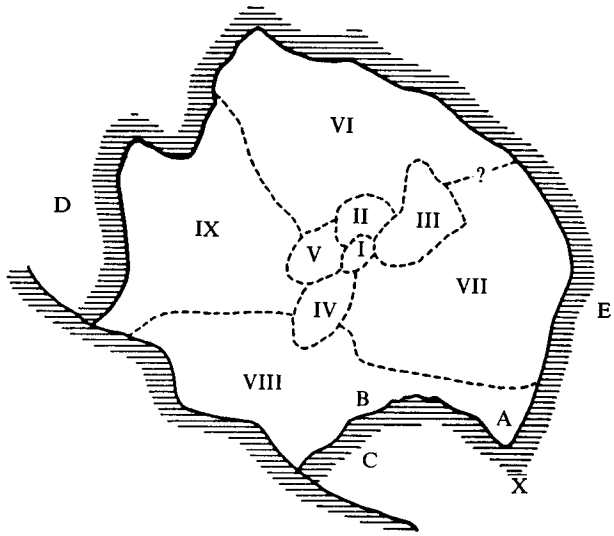


Figure 7.3. (a) Negri Sembian. *Source:* Josselin de Jong (1952).

I = Sri Menanti
II = Ulu Muar
III = Djempol
IV = Gunung Pasir
V = Teratji
VI = Djelebu
VII = Djohol
VIII = Rembau
IX = Sungai-Udjong
A = Gementjeh
B = Tampin
C = Naning
D = Klang
E = Segamat
X = Mt. Ledang

[4] It is interesting that the concept of quincunx, which normally means the five-unit system we have described, has the botanical meaning of an arrangement (aestivation) of five leaves, two exterior and two interior, while the fifth is partly both.

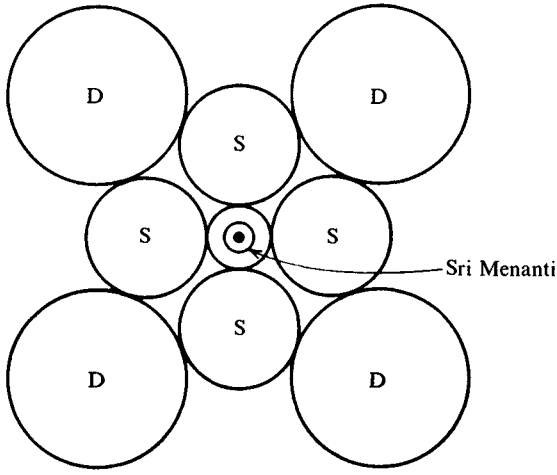


Figure 7.3. (b) Schematic design of Nigri Sembilan polity as a nine-unit system. D = District, S = *Serambi* (verandah).

Java (in the second quarter of the eighteenth century) as constructed thus: (1) At the center of Mataram around the capital was situated the royal appanages (*negari ageng*); (2) the remaining area was divided into two parts know as *mantjanegar* and *pasisir*, each again subdivided into an eastern and western half (Shorto 1963, p. 582). As Figure 7.1*b* shows, this account can be represented as a five-unit system derived through partitioning – an inference we should keep in mind when later we attempt

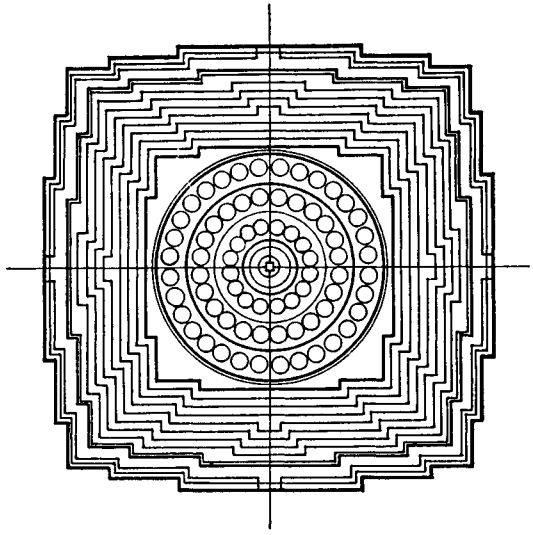


Figure 7.4 (a) Plan of Borobudur. *Source:* Stewart (1970).

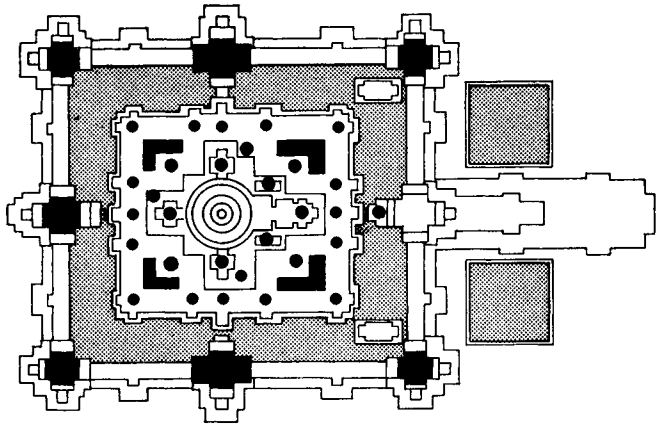


Figure 7.4 (b) Plan of the temple at Bayon. *Source:* Stewart (1970).

to figure out the design of the complex Ayutthayan polity. Moertono (1968) also describes the old Javanese polity's organizational grouping of villages (*desa*) in similar terms: The core region of the king's realms, the *nagaragung*, was distinguished from the outer regions, the *mantjanegara* (a concept derived from the Sanskrit word *pantja* "which means 'five,' putting us in mind of the five-sectional village alliance") (p. 27). Moertono refers to a dual grouping of the king's officials into those of the left and those of the right (*keparak kiwa* and *keparak tengen*, or *gedong kiwa* and *gedong tengen*), "reflecting conformity with nature's symmetry";

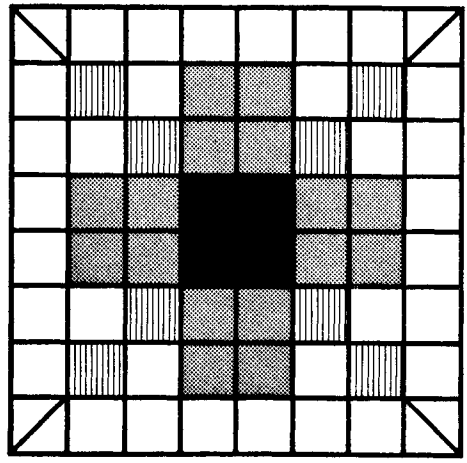


Figure 7.4. (c) The mandala of 64 divisions. *Source:* Stewart (1970).

once again this dual classification will concern us when we consider the Ayutthayan design.

Examining the formal properties of these center-oriented constructs as a form of classification, we can see that from an initial pentadic or quinary system it is possible to build up progressively expanded series. Our interest is in how cosmological schemes and pantheons, ground plans of kingdoms, capitals, and palaces, and organizational arrangements of political functionaries, ministers, and officials were mapped onto these basic designs. The problem of our investigation is penetratingly stated by Shorto:

> Besides the representation in one form or another, of the parts of the whole at the centre, the complexes we have been discussing share a notional orientation to east, south, west, north and intermediate points, and usually a direct relationship between the centre and the districts, both of which are summed up in the designation of the provinces of Ramanna as *Mandala* "circles." Granted an initial multiplicity of pentads, expansions to 9, 17, or 33 can be fitted well enough to the process of coalescence which culminated in the states of the historical period (p. 587).

Furthermore, "Indian cosmology is built up in fours, and it is noteworthy that to each of our stages there corresponds a model of a cosmological nature" (p. 588). And commenting on "the sustaining effect of myths," Shorto reminds us that time and again the formal aspect of a complex was attempted to be maintained in the teeth of day-to-day practice, because "the considerations which were at work were not those of administrative convenience" (p. 588). We shall, apropos this assertion, leave open the question until later whether the considerations at work can be satisfactorily accounted for in terms of cosmological imperatives or the sustaining effect of myths or some other underlying logic that informs different levels of thought and action.

We are now in a position to approach and marvel at the 33-unit scheme that is characteristic of Hindu and Buddhist cosmogonies and religio-political groupings, a scheme that perhaps reached its most complex development among the Buddhist peoples of Southeast Asia, partly because, as I have argued in the beginning chapters, the Buddhist scheme makes kingship the wielder of dharma and the organizer of this world in its aspect as polity and as a link between the cosmological levels of heavens of gods and the level of this world of humans.

There is no doubt that the best expression of this model is "the 32 *myos*" of the medieval Mon kingdom and the subsequent "37 *nats*" of the Burmese pantheon. Shorto's impressive elucidation of the Mon scheme shows that the kingdom of Hanthawady (i.e., Pegu) was, according to inscriptional evidence of 1650, divided into 3 provinces and 99 towns, each of the provinces being made up of 32 townships plus the capital, which was separate. There is the simpler formulation that the Mon kingdom of Rammanadesa of lower Burma was divided into 32 townships and the 3 provinces of Pegu, Martaban, and Bassein, and also the more interesting

and widespread tradition "that Thaton, the early Mon kingdom which was overrun by Anawrahta in 1057, had 32 *myos* like the later provinces, each the seat of a subordinate prince, and united by a cetiya cult" (p. 573). "The connexion between the 33 relic pagodas [the tradition is that the original relic of the Buddha was brought to Thaton by the *arahant* Gavampati and that it multiplied into 33 relics] and the 32 *myos* is made explicit in *Gawampati*, a work written about 1710" (p. 574). The scheme is reflected in other idioms – of a high king and his 32 princes; of 33 queens and 33 lineages into which he marries; of his 33 white elephants; and of 33 ordination places (*simas*) in his kingdom, and so on.[5]

Especially since Heine-Geldern (1942), it is widely known that the Buddhist and Hindu polities of Southeast Asia were modeled on cosmological notions and on the basis of a parallelism between the suprahuman macrocosmos and the human microcosmos. The kingdom was a miniature representation of the cosmos, with the palace at the center being iconic of Mount Meru, the pillar of the universe, and the king, his princes, and ruling chiefs representing the hierarchy in Tavatimsa heaven – Indra, the four *lokapala*, and 28 subordinate *devas*. Heine-Geldern also explained the logic of the variation between the Hindu and Buddhist versions thus:

> In the Hindu system the lowest heaven was the realm of Indra, the Lokapalas, and the rulers of the 28 lunar mansions. The Buddhists forgot the identities of the Thirty-three altogether, and gave the Lokapalas new seats on the slopes below. Hence it is that the 32 "high officials" of Hindu Java included four ministers and 28 territorial lords, whereas the Mon *banas* were extra-territorial and raised the total number to 37 (Shorto 1963, p. 590).[6]

Shorto has advanced the view that the principle of the Burmese pantheon of 37 *nats* was borrowed from the Mons, most probably by Anawrahta at the time of the fall of Thaton. Spiro (1967) has in certain respects carried the discussion further by asserting that there are grounds for

[5] Other analogies are the 32-*myo* system of the Pyu state (ninth century), which preceded Thaton: According to the *Glass Place Chronicle*, Sri Ksetra, the Pyu capital, had 32 major and 32 minor gates. (Also see Heine-Geldern 1942.) In Sri Lanka, the *Mahavamsa* and *Thupavamsa* attribute the same model to the Tamils defeated by Duttha Gamini: In a succession of 28 battles, the Sinhala hero took prisoner or killed 32 Tamil kings, and at the final battle he ranged his forces in 32 battalions.

[6] I may indicate however that one of the two Mahayana Japanese Shingon mandala, the Vajradhatu mandala, in its basic form has 37 deities. Hence the 37-unit model may not be a deviation so much as another elaboration.

Anyway the Buddhist system allows us to see an articulation of the five- and nine-unit systems around both the lateral plane and the vertical *axis mundi* to produce a more complex scheme. Five represents the intersection, via projection onto the plane, of the vertical *axis mundi* (note that even in language north = up, south = down) with the east–west path of the sun. This intersection defines the *triloka*, the plane being the world of men, with that of the gods above and of the ghosts below. Thus the center (the fifth point) has the four compass quarters about it and incorporates Shorto's observation that the Buddhist system projects the *lokapala* downward between the heaven of Indra and the abode of men. Nine, then, results from the meeting of the four downward projections on the plane of four quarters around a center point.

believing that the *nat* structure not only reflects the political order but was instituted and deliberately reinterpreted and manipulated by the throne for political purposes, a view that is not incompatible with Mendelson's (1961, 1963). But Spiro has underplayed, if not ignored, a matter of cardinal importance for the cosmological scheme (and for his thesis of Buddhism and the *nat* cults being two religions in conflict), which is that in the Burmese national cult there was, in parallel with the Mon cult, "a clear link between the 37 nats and the *cetiya* worship associated in Thaton tradition with the territorial system: most of the '*devatas* who had entered the stream' . . . are spirits who inhabited trees at pagodas or other Buddhist sites" (Shorto 1963, p. 590). This welding together of the Buddhist pagoda worship and *nat* propitiation found its paradigmatic expression in the installation of *nats* by King Kyanzittha in the Shwezigon, "the most 'national' of all Burma's pagodas" (Luce 1969, p. 275).

In the previous chapter we discussed in what respect early Pagan and its eastern Thai neighbor, Sukhodaya, shared certain fundamental conceptions regarding kingship (the cult of *dharmaraja* and its relationship to Buddhism, and the coming together of the palace and the pagoda at the highest levels). We also indicated that the capital was laid out in terms of the four cardinal points and three concentric circles and that the architectural composition of the principal shrine of Wat Mahadhatu in terms of axial and subaxial towers was also ideologically reflected in the description of the king's *abhiseka* ceremony. We also noted, however, the lack of evidence of the cult of 37 *nats* (or some other similar pantheon) being practiced in Sukhodaya and Ayutthaya.[7] Nevertheless, I wish to dwell briefly on a more general implication of the spatial representation of the polity in geometric relations, which are at the same time overladen with political, territorial, and cosmological values. These representations are shared by both Thai and Burmese (and other) traditional polities and imply a close linkage between political authority and Buddhist place of worship, as, for example, in modern Thailand, between the *lak muang* (the "pillar" of the town) of the metropolis and provincial capitals, and the parallel series of chief monastic wat centers and seats.

In other words, whether organized as 5-, 9-, 17-, 33-, or larger-unit systems, the mandala schemes mirrored a cosmos that was deployed first and foremost *topographically*. And since this topography represented a cosmic harmony, there was good reason to pattern the state after it. The pattern conjoins a certain kind of physical cum spatial relationship with a distinctive conception of social and political relations among humans; moreover, these same relations inform the attributions to the pantheon of

[7] As we shall see later, the capital province (*rachathani*) of Ayutthaya in the period 1460–1590 is described as composed of 34 *muang noi* (small "provinces"), a number which is a variant of the 33-unit model. But there was no associated *nat* cult on the Burmese scale.

deities and demons. The topographical grid is closely linked to a temporal scheme as well, when, for instance, seasonal cosmic rites are orchestrated so that a rite is first performed at the capital by the king or his delegate, to be followed in time by the provincial rulers, and they by their lesser district heads, and so on – a scheme of activation from the center to the periphery in successive waves.[8] It is one of our major tasks to unravel such distinctive ethnosociological conceptions behind the galactic polity, and let us approach that task by marshaling the information.

From Cosmology to Political Process

The evidence relating to Thaton (whose administrative divisions of 1650 continued in force, except in Bassein, until the first Anglo-Burmese war) clearly indicates that the 32-*myo* pattern, or its variants, was a blueprint, which was sought to be implemented, in the belief that it intimately affected the well-being of king, polity, and people. This is the formal aspect of the system, and its archetype supposes a king ruling over a circle of subordinate princes.

But from a dynamic perspective the *myo* pattern was the frame for events and outcomes of a pulsating kind. We are told, therefore, that the three provinces of Rammanadesa were originally independent kingdoms and that they in turn represented a coalescence of lesser principalities and chieftainships (Shorto p. 577).

"When a state was conquered there seems to have been no idea in Mon or Burmese, any more than in Indian political theory, that it was possible to extinguish it as a sovereign entity, or to annex it in the modern sense, though its ruler might be replaced by a nominee of the conqueror. The nominee will be accounted royal. . . . Even under the Alaungpaya dynasty the offices of provincial governors were dignified by the title of *yondaw* 'royal court' " (p. 578).

Translated into a hierarchy of persons and functionaries, the model was rather simple. In Mon terminology, the king and princes were called *smin*, the king himself being the *gna smin* in the Pagan period, or *tala nah*, owner of the people, in the medieval kingdom. Under the king there were four *banas*, senior nobles of the realm, and the heads of the districts or provinces in theory directly accountable to the king. (The scheme thus implied a king, 4 ministers, 28 regional princes or chiefs, adding up to 33.) In order to see the scheme in practice we must pay close attention to the range of meanings attached to the locational concept of *dun*, meaning successively capital, provincial city, district town, and so on.

I have dwelt on those Mon and Burmese usages because they are a

[8] It is, for instance, thought that the first ploughing ceremony was performed in the nineteenth century first in Bangkok and subsequently in the provincial capitals, with brahmans in attendance.

useful introduction to (and replication of) some of the features documented with respect to the Thai polity of Sukhodaya, features that are ingredients of the galactic polity. The concept *moaṅ* (*muang*),[9] like the Mon *dun*, has meanings whose parameters range from kingdom or country to town, province, or region. In actual fact, the most relevant gloss for concepts such as *muang* and *dun* is that they refer to centered or center-oriented space (as opposed to bounded space) and typically stand for a capital or town or settlement with the surrounding territory over which it exercised jurisdiction. This connotation of center-oriented space is fundamental to the geometrical design underlying the galactic state and has obviously widespread application in Southeast Asia, as exemplified by this comment of Moertono with respect to old Java:

> territorial jurisdiction could not be strictly defined by permanent boundaries, but was characterized by a fluidity or flexibility of boundary development dependent on the diminishing or increasing power of the center. This was evident in the words of the *dalang* cited elsewhere; the state "is far reaching in its fame," and was a "bright world." The state is thus likened to a torch so bright that it spreads its light far afield (1963, p. 112).[10]

Not only in Java but also elsewhere in Thailand, Burma, and so on, it was commonly the case that the names of kingdoms were those of capital cities (e.g., Sukhodaya, Ayutthaya, Pagan, Pegu, Madjapahit, Singhasari). This concept of territory as a variable sphere of influence that diminishes as royal power radiates from a center is integral to the characterization of the traditional polity as a mandala composed of concentric circles, usually three in number.

The concentric-circle system, representing the center-periphery relations, was ordered thus: In the center was the king's capital and the region of its direct control, which was surrounded by a circle of provinces ruled by princes or governors appointed by the king, and these again were surrounded by more or less independent "tributary" polities. But note that the capital itself was ordered as a mandala, the palace at the center surrounded by three circles of earthen ramparts, with four gateways at the cardinal points. This we have already described as the Sukhodaya scheme. Let us now explore how the layout of the capital was replicated in the arrangement of the kingdom.

Our first interest is in the constitution of the central or capital region and its provinces, and their mutual relations. If we keep in mind the expanding and shrinking character of the political constellations under scrutiny, a central, perhaps the central, feature to be grasped is that although the constituent political units differ in size, nevertheless each lesser unit

[9] Since my source here is Wales (1934), I shall follow his spelling and give in parenthesis the orthography usual today.

[10] Anderson (1972) develops this point that the traditional Javanese state is defined by its center, not by its perimeter, and that the notion of firm frontier is a conception of the modern state.

is a reproduction and imitation of the larger. Thus we have before us a galactic picture of a central planet surrounded by differentiated satellites, which are more or less "autonomous" entities held in orbit and within the sphere of influence of the center. Now if we introduce at the margin other similar competing central principalities and their satellites, we shall be able to appreciate the logic of a system that is a hierarchy of central points continually subject to the dynamics of pulsation and changing spheres of influence.

We could illustrate this galactic model by reference to Sukhodaya, which after it became an independent *muang* by freeing itself from Khmer control, succeeded in bringing under its way three neighboring *muangs*, all situated within a distance of two days' march: Svargoloka (then called Sajanaliya) in the north, Bisnuloka in the south, and Kambenbejra in the west (Wales 1934, p. 69). Prince Damrong is cited by Wales as having given this description of the traditional Siamese kingdom: (1) At the center was the capital province or region, ruled by the king, *moaṅ hlvaṅ* (*muang luang*, great or chief *muang*). Within this royal domain, the king was situated in his capital city and within it again in his palace. (2) At the four cardinal points were the *moaṅ* (*muang*), each ruled by a son of the king (and their sons in turn often succeeded them). These regions, ruled by the princes, as almost independent kingdoms, were regarded as having the status of children to the capital province, as signified by the expression *moaṅ luk hlvaṅ* (*muang luk luang*). The provinces were received from the king and governed on the same lines as the capital, the sons being sworn to cooperate with the father for mutual defense and on campaigns of conquest. (3) This principle of a decentralized constellation of units that replicate one another in that they show minimal differentiation of function finds expression also among those units recognized as the building blocks of the internal structure of a *muang*, whether capital or provincial. Examples of these lower-level components are the *bo pan* (*pau ban*), "father" of the village settlement, who is followed at the lowest level by the *bo grua* (*pau khrua*), the "father" of the hearth (i.e., head of commensal household/family). (4) The outer ring, the third concentric circle, beyond the four provinces was the region of independent kingdoms, which, wherever brought under sway, were in a tributary relation, that is, a relation of overlordship rather than direct political control. When King Ram Kamheng claimed as part of his kingdom various Lao polities of the north and northeast, the old kingdom of Nagara Sri Dharmaraja in the south, and the kingdom of Pegu to the west, he was at best claiming this indirect overlordship.

King Ram Kamheng's inscriptions give evidence of the following social classification of the ruling stratum (and is reminiscent of the Mon concepts cited earlier):

1. *khun*, the ruling princes/nobles, especially of the relatively autonomous provinces

2. *ba khun* (*pau khun*), the "father" of the *khun*, the appellation for the king, who was also called *cau moaṅ* (*chao muang*)

3. *luk khun*, literally "children" of the *khun*, who were lesser princes/nobles confined to the capital *muang* and who as "chiefs of the great body of retainers which formed the population of his capital and the land immediately surrounding assisted the king in matters of administration" (Wales 1934, p. 69)

This center-oriented concentric-circle view of the polity was pervasive in Southeast Asia. Thus a Javanese document, the *Nagarakertagama*, refers to three kinds of regions or provinces seen from the center: Java, the regions of and islands outside Java including the southern part of the Malay Peninsula, and the countries beyond like Champa and Cambodia. In the later Mataram period there were also three categories recognized – *nagaragung* (the core region), *mantjanegara* and the *pasisir* (the outlying provinces), and the *tamah sabrang* (the lands across the sea). Moertono, having presented the preceding information, expounds a basic feature of these center-oriented pulsating polities:

> What we have observed about the relative position of officials in the *nagaragung* and in the *mantjanegara* leads us to conclude that a territory was allocated to one of the three categories on the basis of the degree of influence that the center, that is, the king, exercised there. Consequently, territorial jurisdiction could not be strictly defined by permanent boundaries, but was characterized by a fluidity or flexibility of boundary dependent on the diminishing or increasing power of the center (1968 p. 112).[11]

It is only after appreciating the decentralized locational disposition of the traditional polity and its replication of like entities on a decreasing scale – which constitute a galactic constellation rather than a bureaucratic hierarchy – that we can move on to the consideration of the polity's centripetal aspects and of how the center attempts to hold the remainder. In this connection a feature of the traditional polity to be borne in mind is the nesting pattern whereby lower-order centers and entities are progressively contained and encompassed by the higher-order centers or entities (as we have noted previously in the ascending order of *pau krua, pau ban, luk khun . . . pau khun*).

One of the principal implications of cosmological models is that the center represents the totality and embodies the unity of the whole. In the Negri Sembilan case cited earlier, the royal district of Sri Menanti, and more especially its ruler, the Jangdipertuan Besar, is the representative of the whole polity. Furthermore, the royal district (*luha*) "is seen as the one that gathers together the distinct elements of each separate district: Negri Sembilan as a whole has twelve *suku* [clan], of which four traditionally occur in varying combinations in each single *luha*; but in Sri Menanti all twelve *suku* are met with" (de Jong 1952, p. 151). Further-

[11] Again Moertono expounds: ". . . jurisdiction, be it personal or territorial, had to be expanded or retracted according to the reality of power distribution between power holders in the center and the regions as well as between different states" (p. 114).

more, the ruler in his aspect as a husband of his country must marry a woman who is not of royal descent but is one of his matrilineally organized subjects; indeed, a ruler is not thought fully suited for his tasks unless he has united with a representative of his subjects, thus perpetuating the myth of the union of first ruler, Radja Malewar, reputed to have come over the Minangkabau, with a woman of Negri Sembilan. Finally, it comes as no surprise that Mount Meru, symbolic of the center and pivot of the universe, is located in the ruler's capital. There was one Meru behind his palace at Sri Menanti on a hill dedicated to the god Indra, and another within the palace grounds itself that plays an important part in his installation ceremony.

This representation that the king, his palace, his capital are the pivots and embodiments of the kingdom, this totalizing conception, reached its apogee in the complex and elaborate courts and polities extending from Burma to Cambodia.[12] That, for instance, in the Buddhist-Hindu polities, the divine mountain was not only physically reproduced in the capital, but was identified with the palace itself with its multitiered roof, needs no elaborate documentation. For Thailand such realizations of cosmological ideas in architecture and ritual in both the Ayutthaya and Bangkok periods have been amply documented by Wales (1931) and others. Therefore, it is appropriate that I cite an example of the cosmic rites of purification and regeneration performed recently in a Laotian province by Prince Bun Um, particularly because the place in question – Campasak with its capital of Basak – was formerly, depending on its political fortunes, the tributary kingdom or subjugated province of the two competing kingdoms of Siam and Vientiane. Charles Archaimbault's description (1971) of the New Year ceremony at Basak, southern Laos, not only exemplifies the manner in which the *chao muang* (the prince of the realm) is the chief officiant as well as devotee, purifier as well as bearer of the wrongs and misfortunes of his people and realm – in ceremonies which in ordered sequence involve Buddhist monks and wat as well as tutelary spirits of localities and their mediums and officiants – but also illustrates a cardinal point that the galactic polity's provinces and satellites are replicas of the center on a smaller scale. The following excerpts from Archaimbault's account are all the more eloquent when we realize that the officiating prince no longer rules his realm although the rites still carry performative meaning:

In the New Year ceremony, the chief emphasis is on a purification ritual presided over by Cao Bun Um. It is designed to regenerate the strength of the

[12] Wheatley writes: "Once again it is ancient Cambodia which provides some of the most impressive manifestations of the centripetality of capital cities. At the heart of the ceremonial city of *Yaśodharapura*, for example, the Bayon was constituted as a pantheon of the gods of the personal and regional cults practised in various parts of the kingdom. By assembling them at the sacred axis of Kambujadesá, Jayararman VII channelled the potentially competitive cosmic forces into his own capital" (1967, pp. 13–14).

Muang – that is, the city of Basak and by extension the whole principality – by ridding it of defilement and of the troubles set in motion by Nang P'ao's misconduct . . . (p. 2).

The Prince enters the monastery precinct, takes the tray from Acan Ku Nu's hands, and sticks two lighted candles on it. A table covered with Buddha images stands in the courtyard. Crouching in front of it, the Prince raises the tray before his forehead, silently praying for the safety of the principality. He puts down the tray and takes up a silver ewer filled with perfumed water, with which he sprinkles first the images on the table and then the large Buddha images of gilded wood at the entrance of the monastery. His relatives next take turns in sprinkling the images with water from the ewer, which is constantly refilled. They are followed by the "notables" (officials and leading citizens) and the general public, using water perfumed with *acacia concinna* in plain jars which they have brought from home, and dipping frangipani flowers into it to serve as sprinklers. In the orthodox view the lustration of the images is intended to earn merit and regenerate the spiritual strength of the Muang; but its purpose in the minds of the peasants is to call down plenty of rain before work in the fields begins . . . (p. 4).

The Prince, after sticking a lighted candle on each raft, prostrates himself three times before the monks. They recite *Namo, Pahum, Karuniko, Bhavantusara,* then the *Parimata* and the *Parimana.* After the prayers the Acan withdraws. The Prince takes a small ball of sticky rice which is given him by a servant, and rubs his body with it, murmuring: "Go away now, all of you! Eat these farewell foods (*k'uang song k'ien*) which I offer you! May the country prosper!" He throws the ball of rice into one of the rafts, and another one into the second raft. A servant sets the first raft afloat on a nearby watercourse, and takes the second one away to the outskirts of the village. The parts of the floor of the pavilion where the rafts stood is then washed with water from the lacquered basket . . . (p. 8).

When the *ba si* ceremony is over, the village notables meet at Cao Bun Um's house and then, led by the Prince carrying a ewer of water, they track down the young girls of the locality. Going into all the houses from north to south, they forcibly sprinkle the girls with water or rub them with soot (a prophylactic rite); on this day the girls cannot count on protection from their fathers. While on the *sangkhan pai* day the women contributed to the recreation of the *Muang* by sprinkling the Prince and his followers, on *sangkhan khun* day a new order is established which restores the power of the men . . . (p. 12).

The Prince goes downstairs and takes his seat under the veranda, where everyone who has sprinkled the statue now sprinkles him in order to assure an abundant rainfall. Then the Prince puts on new clothes and goes down to the river, where he liberates a quantity of live fish brought to him in a basket by a servant. He also liberates doves at Wat T'ong, so as to earn merit which will help him to get free if he ever happens to fall into a trap . . . (p. 13).

The much publicized king's harem of Ayutthayan and Bangkok times (until King Rama V's successor), located in the inner palace where resided the women "forbidden" (*nang harng*) to leave it (except under special circumstances), is not fully appreciated for its significance as a representation of the unity of the kingdom by means of his queens, concu-

bines, and ladies-in-waiting. Unlike the simpler tribal polities composed of clan or lineage units in which marriage and affinity could effect a system of ordered alliances between them and thereby contribute to a wider integration,[13] in the more complex polities like the Thai and Burmese the queens and concubines were taken from, or more usually gifted by, the princes and nobles, who on the one hand could hope to influence the king and court through their sisters and daughters and who on the other hand could be manipulated and controlled by the king in whose harem these women were confined as "hostages." Thus in centralized polities the king could be viewed as representing his subjects through the obligatory or politically feasible alliances between himself, as the highest personage, and the princes (*chao*), nobles and high officials (*khunnang*), who in various ways are the leaders of groups of people, rulers of regional subdivisions, and members of the upper echelons of the social hierarchy. In a sense then the high king's multiple marriages and unions assumed and validated his rights over the constituent units of his polity, and they had to be renewed, so to say, in each reign. In another sense, princes, nobles, and commoners produced "royal" children through their womenfolk. Thus in the Bangkok era the royal harem's size and the numerous royal children of various grades it produced is most indicative. Rama I had 42 children from 28 mothers, Rama II 73 children from 40 mothers, Rama III had 51 children from 37 mothers, and King Mongkut 82 children from 35 mothers. Of these children, those of *chao fa* status, that is, born of a queen or princess (*chao*), were respectively in each of the above reigns 10, 7, 0 (because no concubine was made queen), and 5.

As may be expected, the king's court, replicated by princes and nobles, entailed polygamy, which was widespread among them and had similar implications:

> The princes and the nobles had large numbers of wives, and thus numerous offspring. The higher the position the noble occupied, the larger would tend to be the number of his wives and offspring. Thus *Phraya* Sisahathep (Thong Pheng), the favorite of King Rama III, had 57 wives and 48 offspring. Of these there were 16 surviving sons. Three of them only attained the rank of *phraya*, seven attained the rank of *luang* and above, two obtained ranks lower than *luang*, and four were the royal pages without official rank. Of his female offspring, one became a concubine of King Rama III, one became a wife of a

[13] Marriage or unions can be seen to participate in the production of wider systems of social solidarity and political integration, as has been demonstrated by Levi-Strauss, Leach and Needham (and others). In the simplest case, prescriptive marriage can link groups of equal status; a more complex transformation is where, in the context of ranked lineages, asymmetric alliances can link up chiefly lineages to headmen's lineages, and these in turn to commoner lineages, thereby supporting and reinforcing differences of stratification, political power, and land rights. Finally, in a complex centralized polity, without a segmentary descent structure, the king's inner court is composed of women given by his subjects. This threefold pattern is, for example, represented by *Gumlao*, *Gumsa*, and *Shan* models in Leach's *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (1954).

prince of *krom* rank, and four married nobles of the rank of *phraya* and *phra* (Rabibhadana 1969, p. 157).

Phraya Sisahathep was no exception, and other ministers had similar establishments and offspring.[14]

Besides the royal harem's role in forging bonds between the Bangkok (or still earlier, Ayutthayan) government and leaders of vassal states and provinces (Vella 1955, p. 327), there were other mechanisms by which they were linked, as, for example, the institution of the *mahatlek*, the corps of royal pages serving the king, who were sons of princes and nobles. Especially in the Bangkok period, the posting of the *yakkrahpatra* (*yokkrabat*) charged with legal and judicial duties and serving as the king's agent and spy, acted as a check on the provincial governor and transmitted information about local developments directly to the king. It also emerges from the accounts of Wales and Rabibhadana that the king was strongly suspicious of, and treated as evidence of treason, unauthorized association and visiting between the governors or the *chao muang* and attempted (this is another exemplification of the galactic model) to bind the provincial rulers to himself in dyadic relation as a protection against potential rebellion and secession. Finally, we may also include in this enumeration the celebrated ritual of "drinking the water of allegiance," a semi-annual event at which all governors and local rulers were enjoined to be present, take an oath of loyalty, and drink sanctified water, an act believed to have dire consequence for the disloyal.

Apart from the performance of cosmic rites and the maintenance of a royal harem, how *active* or *passive*, charged with *initiative* or weighed down by convention, was the *center* of the galactic polity? In this regard, it is useful as an expository device to present the answer as a dialectic, between a king's passive aspect in the legislative and domestic policy fields and an active heroic aspect in the conduct of warfare.

I have in Chapter 4 in connection with early Buddhist ideas on the dharma of kingship alluded to its conception as inefficient causality in the sense of giving order and unity to the world in an elevated and a rarefied sense. The propensity to make a king in theory so supreme and ascendant – and thereby to assimilate him to ideas of divinity and mediation between cosmos and microcosmos – could well result in his main task being conceived, as in the case of his celestial prototypes, as maintaining and restoring order, and through the possession of merit as overcoming social misfortunes of disease and drought, rather than as the initiation of de-

[14] We may also note in passing that the so-called descending rule in Thailand by which royal children lost rank in each generation, until by the fifth generation they descended into the commoners, was constantly counteracted by the fact that kings and princes were consorting with the females produced by those same individuals losing rank or with female kinsmen of commoner or noble status, related to them through their mothers' brothers and other maternal kin. These practices helped to renew or maintain status over time through endogamous practices. We shall later bring this into focus when discussing the role of the Bunnak family (see Rabibhadana, pp. 167–170).

velopmental change. And of course this orientation itself fits into the cosmological and astrological notions of repetitive cycles and of calendrical systems divisible into units bearing values on a numerological basis. Once again what Moertono propounds as the Javanese view has other resonances:

> Two ideas seemed to dominate the Javanese view of order (*tata* or less commonly, *krama*). They are, first, the idea of fixed regularity and, second the idea of non-interference . . . clinging to the security of the known, the Javanese thought that interfering with the regulars, the fixed, might disturb the Order, the results of which – because of the principle of interaction – might be of calamitous proportions. This idea of non-interference will be reflected in state administration too (1968, p. 37).
>
> [I]n the Kidung Pamancangha, *sang amurwa bhumi*[15] is the title of the king. Thus the king is placed at the pinnacle of the social order, far beyond the reach of the common people. This point of view at one time gave rise to the idea of the king as a politically inactive power, the *ratu pinandita* (the sage king), from whom emanated beneficent influences, permeating his own realm. Active participation in the affairs of the state was left to his dignitaries . . . (p. 36).

Now these aspects of kingship relating to noninterference, nonefficient causality, and passivity do link up with another feature of Theravada Buddhist legal theory we have already discussed in Chapter 6, namely, the Mon-Burmese-Thai conception of law as *dhammasattham* or *thammasat*, which, as Lingat has explained to us, was an eternal code of justice and equity and which it was the business of king and his officials to implement. The positive aspect of law as command of the sovereign was identified with individual acts of the king under the aspect of *rajasattham*. Thus in theory the king did not legislate though he could issue orders.[16] In practice of course a certain number of particular decisions of kings did find their way into the "eternal" code, but the other side of the coin was that particular drastic, disturbing and impetuous decisions and acts of kings could also be prevented from becoming obligatory precedents.

But if legal conceptions, imbued with eternal moral ideas, took precedence over the particular acts of historical royal personages, there was another sphere of action, considered quintessentially royal, that enjoined an activistic heroic orientation, namely, martial prowess in the conduct of battle. Of course it is in the nature of warfare that it can at best be only episodic and spasmodic, especially under the constraints and conditions of warfare then prevailing in Sukhodaya, Pagan, or Ayutthaya. These periods of spurts and quiescence are intimately related to the mode of mobilization of manpower for warfare, the kinds and mode of control of the weapons and means of warfare. These in turn relate in the larger sense to the institutional arrangements for the mobilization of labor for the

[15] This phrase means "the ancient or elder of the earth" or "prior to the earth."

[16] As Sarkisyanz (1965) says of Burma: "The historical Burmese king did not issue commands that would claim the power of law; the state did not actually legislate (but practically commanded and ideally exhorted)" (p. 15).

other enterprises of the rulers, the pattern of extraction and distribution of agricultural surplus, the degree of control of overseas and internal trade. Some of these issues will be brought into focus when we discuss the Ayutthayan polity in the next chapter; here let us note some of the features that account for the rationale of warfare.

Wales has remarked on the frequency of warfare among the Thai polities and their neighbors, warfare being conducted chiefly during the dry season. It is of cardinal importance to bear in mind that the economic backbone of these polities is really dispersed valley-based rice-growing settlements in a part of the world where land was plentiful, the river system congenial, and the demographic density quite low. There were really two chief objectives to the conduct of warfare – capture of prisoners and of booty.

The capture of prisoners – not only of soldiers in the opposite camp but of whole settlements in the enemy's territory – and their wholesale transfer and transplantation within one's own domain was one of the main purposes of going to war.[17] "Loss of population by captivity was infinitely more serious than the comparatively small numbers of those killed in actual fighting." Hence "the preservation of the nation's manpower [was] one of the chief preoccupations of the Siamese government" (Wales 1934, p. 9). Rabibhadana reiterates the same point admirably:

> One particular characteristic of the historical Southeast Asian mainland states was the lack of manpower. The need for manpower is well illustrated by events following each war between Thailand and her neighbors. The victorious side always carried off a large number of people from the conquered territory. Whole villages were often moved into the territory of the conqueror, where they were assimilated and became the population of the conqueror. The Thai seem to have been especially aware of the importance of having a large population. The famous inscription of the early Thai King Ram Kamhaeng could be interpreted as an advertisement inducing people to come and settle in the Sukhothai kingdom. The rules given to the Governor of Nakhon Sithammarat in 1784 placed special emphasis on his duty to memorize the number of *phrai* (commoners) in his province. Here recognition that people created an area's wealth can also be seen. He (the governor) should frequently read the list of *lek* (male commoners), and commit to memory their number so that, when they are needed for government service, they can be called into service easily. When *lek* of any *mu* (platoon) or *kong* (battalion) are lazy and have run away to hide themselves in the forest and on the hills, and thus have not been tatooed nor served in government service, the Governor should appoint loyal officials to go out to them and persuade them to come and settle down in an inhabited area so that the area will be wealthy (1969, p. 16).

The attraction of booty was an essential ingredient of warfare: This was the primary means of rewarding the army, the king and other participating

[17] It is clear that similar considerations applied in traditional Java, where control of populations was more important than of territory, and rulers also attempted wholesale deportations of prisoners (Anderson, in Holt 1972, p. 30).

generals and rulers getting their share of the most valuable prizes. In this context, one must face the brute fact that although attacker and attacked were members of Buddhist polities, they mercilessly and rapaciously demolished each other's temples (and palaces) and took away famous Buddha images and relics together with jewels and other treasures. (The rubble to which the Burmese reduced Ayutthaya in 1767 was, as we have remarked before, a furious act of demolition.) But such an aggressive orientation was an integral aspect of the ideology that linked kingship and Buddhism with the destinies and histories of particular "peoples," that is, it represented the Buddhist polity in its particularized and localized expression.

Associated with the transference and flight of people under conditions of warfare was the fact that the people so transferred adapted easily to and became incorporated into the new polity – a comment on the cultural and social organizational similarity of these peoples, whatever their differentiating and volatile "ethnic" labels such as Mon, Burman, Thai, and so on. Indeed, the defection of subjects en masse from a particular oppressed region or from a region being punished for treason – a common enough occurrence in these polities with shifting boundaries and spheres of influence, and particular regions within them being subject to the mobilization for warfare with a nearby enemy – to a neighboring kingdom was not unknown and was encouraged by the host. Equally frequent was the flight from political authority of the villagers and commoners, under pressures of service and exaction, into the forests and jungles in the border regions and rims of provinces and *muangs*. "In a society, where the belief in fate was so strong, reaction against an oppressive rule lay in evasion rather than in interference. At a time when population was sparse, untilled land was available in abundance, and especially when wooded areas and mountain ranges could still provide hiding places, such tactics were most feasible."[18]

But the flight of the populace to the jungles is only half the story; the more usual form of escaping oppression under one master or overlord was to seek the service and protection of another. And in both Ayutthaya and early Bangkok eras, when commoners were divided between those who served the king (*phrai luang*) and those who served the princes (*phrai som*) and were at the same time allotted to departments and establishments (*krom*) under the control of officials and nobles, the ground was laid for the kind of volatile factional struggles and aggrandizing exploits that produced an intermittent chain of usurpations and rebellions. Thus was divine kingship conjoined dialectically with perennial rebellion, a duality that was the product of and consonant with many other associated features. First of all, there was the absence of valid stipulated rules of succession, which found empirical expression in princes warring for the throne in their capacities as sons or brothers and in the usurpations of ambitious

[18] Moertono (1968), p. 75; also see Gullick (1958, Ch. 2), who refers to the flight of Malay villagers under oppressive conditions.

generals or ministers, who made good their claims by preferably marrying a queen or princess of the dethroned house. Then there were the special "charisma" and "powers," gained by special initiation or ascetic practice or even by auspicious birth, that were recognized as signs of merit and power, and capable of putting out of court hereditary claims to kingship. It is indeed arguable that the ceremonies of installation, particularly the *abhiseka*, achieved precisely this divinisation, elevation, and legitimation of those ambitious candidates who had fought their way to the throne.

Finally, we should also bear in mind that at the higher levels of Buddhist doctrine and the more popular levels of mythology (especially beliefs and legends pertaining to the coming Maitreya and other millenarian expectations), there was always a justification and a rationalization for rebellion in times construed as immoral or in decline. Characteristically, Burma provides us with the best examples in recent times of these millenarian expectations serving as a blueprint of and for rebellion. Sarkisyanz (1965) has explained for us with sensitive appreciation the significance of such representations.[19] Having stated that the inevitable decline of all things was seen as but a passing phenomenon in the Hindu-Buddhist meaning of history, Sarkisyanz continues:

> In cyclical sequence, the rise and decline of world ages follow each other in a flow of endless change. In the context of this Buddhist folk-ideology, events of the present and of the recent past tend to be assimilated to happenings of the distant or even legendary past and, indeed, to those of the distant future: Precisely the apparent deterioration of the traditional order indicated that the lowest point of the Cycle of Decline was near, and that therefore the upward development of the new World Age would approach. In this sense, precisely the fall of Burma's Buddhist kingdom tended to foreshadow a distant future when the world would be unified in peace within a perfect Buddhist society, anticipating the advent of the future Buddha. From this background arose a rich folklore of prophecies ("Thaik"). . . . and such prophecies in the form of folk beliefs played a considerable role in the 20th century . . . (p. 9).

It comes as no surprise that in another part of Southeast Asia similar elements of the Hindu-Buddhist cosmology of the declining and repetitive cycle of the world ages (*yuga*) and the regeneration from chaos to cosmos should generate similar millenarian expectations: "The Javanese of Later Mataram knew this cosmology, although in a corrupted form, and used it to justify dynastic change. The necessity to end the *djaman kalabendu* (the Kali-Yuga in Indian mythology, the last and most sinful age in a cycle) in order to enter the era of welfare and prosperity under the *Ratu Adil* (The Just King) was a recurrent rationale in the history of revolt and unrest in Java" (Moertono 1968, p. 54).

At the close of this schematic and formalized account of various dimensions of the galactic polity, what we can say in a nutshell are its conspicuous features. First of all, it would be wrong to represent the polity

[19] See also Mendelson (1961), D. E. Smith (1965), Spiro (1970).

as a cosmological plan of static properties; rather, within certain logical and geopolitical limits or parameters, different kings made different uses of their potentialities. Closely related to this is the fact of pulsations and dramatic changes in the fortunes of these polities. The galactic polity was no effective cybernetic system; it lacked finely fashioned regulative and feedback mechanisms that produced homeostasis and balance.

Thus behind its cosmology and its conception as a mandala; behind the fact of the whole polity being held together as an ordered unity by the king's enactment of cosmic rites and his role as the validator of his satellites' credentials; behind the doctrines of the exemplary center, of graded spirituality, and of the theater state (Geertz 1973 pp. 36–39); behind these ritually inflated notions we see the dynamics of polities that were modulated by pulsating alliances, shifting territorial control, and frequent rebellions and succession disputes. The shifting capitals and palaces were not so much centers with defined surrounding circumferences as areas of diminishing or increasing control analogous to a field of radiation of light or of heat from a source.

The polities were more characterized by tributary relationships rather than by an exercise of firm fiscal and judicial control. Whatever the formal theory of the king's "ownership" of all land, of his rights of taxation and exaction, of his position as the supreme judicial authority in the highest court of appeal, the traditional mechanisms of delegated authority, of manpower mobilization, of collection of taxes and fees, and of remuneration of the rulers and officials produced quite other than centralized and bureaucratized systems. Hence we must realize how certain concepts in the tool kit of modern political science are of limited use for a positive understanding of these polities as historical totalizations. The galactic duplication of ranked territorial domains of authority arranged in concentric circles surrounding a dominant center, the nesting pattern of the building blocks within each region, these features are in their implications a far cry from the formal representation of a performance-oriented bureaucracy as a scalar and linear hierarchy, with those features highlighted by Max Weber, such as universalistic recruitment, a pyramidal chain of command, continuous communication between superiors and inferiors, the notion of offices and their functionally differentiated activities (specialization) and decreasing competencies. This is why certain externalist comparative criteria such as the degree of centralization as measured by the central authority's control over bureaucracy, over a hierarchy of courts for the dispensation of justice, over the monopoly of force, though useful up to a point, do not inform us what these traditional polities were really about. This is also why, as has been argued in earlier chapters, the treatment of religion, politics, and the economy as separate domains and analytical categories based on Western experience has limited use for comparative purposes. Before we employ them we must ask the questions: Are these meaningful categories for the society in question, and, if so, how are they

seen to be interrelated and ordered vis-à-vis each other? In the same manner we could also ask whether such notions as power, prestige, deference, merit, and so on, are concepts that can be meaningfully disaggregated in the study of the stratification systems of certain societies.

Weber's discussion of patrimonialism (1968, Vol. III, Ch. 12) is of course very pertinent to our elucidation of the structure of the galactic polity. Particularly relevant is his section on "Decentralized Patrimonial Domination: Satrapies and Divisional Principalities," which highlighted the decentralized nature of the center's domination ("the individual parts of the realm evaded the ruler's influence the more, the farther away they were from his residence" (p. 1051) and the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by the dependent rulers of divisional principalities. But much the greater part of Weber's exposition is concerned, as indicated by his frequent use of concepts such as patrimonial domination and patrimonial state, with the processes, mechanisms, and devices by which the king or prince at the center extends his political control and power over the outlying "extrapatrimonial" areas, either through the dispatching of his officials and agents, the *ministeriales*, who owe their loyalty and affiliation to the center (as was the case in ancient Egypt and in China), or through the successful cooption and incorporation of the provincial landed interests and ruling interests, the *honoratiores*, in the center's service through compromise and concession (as happened with the nobility in czarist Russia and the English gentry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). Thus Weber's chief interest was in the formation of *patrimonial bureaucracy* as was accomplished in the complex Egyptian, Ottoman, Chinese, and czarist empires. These strong forms of the patrimonial state are a far cry from the weaker forms, as implied in his brief sketch, of the divisional principalities which are closer to the pulsating Southeast Asian kingdoms of much smaller scale. We shall incorporate some of Weber's contributions in our next section.[20]

The Parameters

The life cycles and trajectories of the traditional polities of Southeast Asia can be viewed as taking place within certain parameters that are the pro-

[20] With regard to the light Weber may throw on the understanding of the galactic polity, Weber's presentation has two inadequacies. Firstly, he was curiously unmusical toward the cosmological and ritual aspects of the galactic polity; secondly, he envisaged patrimonial domination as grounded in the ruler's control of land on which he settled dependents or which he distributed to them. To cite his own words: "Patrimonial domination is thus a special case of patriarchal domination – domestic authority decentralized through assignment of land and sometimes of equipment to the sons of the house or other dependents" (p. 1011). The nuclear idea that patrimonial domination is the "patriarchal household" writ large, or was basically realized in a manorial-type system does not correspond to the politico-economic facts of the traditional polity in Thailand (and elsewhere) in which it is the leader's control over men (i.e., a leader surrounded by his followers) and not his control over land per se that is the nuclear cell.

duct of certain basic ingredients of which the polities are compounded.

The polities can be said to have a *weaker* form, which is perhaps the more usual state, and a *stronger* form, which is perhaps achieved during exceptional periods. The weaker picture of the origins of the polity is that certain decentralized autonomous petty principalities or chiefdoms (e.g., *muang* ruled by *chao* in Thai terminology) already exist on the ground, and among them a dominant principality emerges, which attempts to pull them together and hold them as a differentiated whole; but this centripetality is achieved not so much by the real exercise of power and control as by the devices and mechanisms of a ritual kind that have performative validity.[21]

Perhaps among contemporary studies, Gullick's *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (1958) is an apt illustration of this weaker state of the traditional polities, in this case, in the period immediately preceding their coming under British control in 1874. The sultan at the apex of each Malay state

> did not in most states of the nineteenth century embody any exceptional concentration of administrative authority. Powerful district chiefs could and sometimes did flout his wishes with impunity; some of them were wealthier than he was. A Sultan was generally in control of a royal district which he governed after the fashion of a district chief. But his role in the political system of the state, as distinct from his additional and local role of district chief of the royal district, did not consist in the exercise of preeminent power (p. 44).

A chief held his district by his own strength rather than by the backing of the sultan. Usually, the sultan recognized, in matters of succession to office, "that the lineage or family which was in control of the district must be allowed to provide the next chief as it had provided the last" (p. 97).

Gullick describes the glue that held together the western Malay galactic polity more in symbolic than in other terms. "To sum up: the Sultan enjoyed a position of great dignity but not in most cases of great power. His dignity was related to his role as the apex of the political system of the state, as the symbol of its unity and *the titular source or rank and authority for the chiefs among whom the real power was divided*" (p. 54) (my italics). No doubt considerations such as threat of external attack, the need for a larger trade unit than the inland district, and even sheer facts of geography may have helped to preserve the sultan and his satellite chiefs as a polity. But the collective representation of the polity, given the "replication" of the sultan by his chiefs, rested on exemplary enactments at court.

We cannot stress too strongly those enactments employing certain symbol-objects that realized the polity in its cosmological form. The sultanate was the source of aristocratic and chiefly titles in that the impress of the sultan's seal was the concrete validation of titled position, and the regalia of office handed by the sultan to the chiefs and officials were again

[21] I have elucidated my view of ritual as a performative act in the Austinian sense in Horton and Finnegan (eds.) 1973.

both concrete transmitters and repositories of righteous power. We cannot here expound in detail how the sacredness of the ruler's office and person was communicated to and resided in the regalia (*kebasaran*, symbols of greatness); here let us note that the objects comprising the Malay regalia consisted of musical instruments (drums, pipes, flutes, and trumpets), insignia of office such as scepter, betel box, jewel, umbrella, seal of state, and secret verbal formula, and weapons such as swords, lances, and long daggers of execution. There were also sumptuary privileges, such as kinds of clothing, domestic architecture and furnishing, rare meats and food, anomalous rare animals and humans (albino elephants and buffaloes, dwarfs and freak-humans), which were associated with and considered the special possession of titled office as well as their objective signifiers. Finally, whatever the realities of power, formal obeisance ceremonies on the part of chiefs toward the sultan and the enactment of a graded cosmos at the sultan's installation and mortuary rites were indeed not merely expressions but also the creations of the galactic polity in its usual form.

Now to turn to the stronger form of the polity. The processes by which this form of the polity was reached in Southeast Asia approximate some of those discussed by Weber in his classic treatment of patrimonial domination: how a patrimonial prince attempts to expand his direct control over the outlying extrapatrimonial areas by extending the relations and links of personal dependency, loyalty, and fidelity; by enlarging his control over the judicial institutions; by securing military control through exercising levying power, and, more importantly, through forming an independent army that frees him from his dependence on his vassals; and by enforcing a monopolistic control over trade in luxury goods, weapons, and involving money. The dispatch of ministeriales and the incorporation of honoratiores were parallel processes.

Returning to Southeast Asia, we could confidently assert that the stronger form of the polity was only rarely and temporarily achieved by strong rulers seizing the opportunities of favorable circumstances. We can ground its emergence in Schrieke's discussion (1955) of "native rulers" in Indonesia. Let us propose a transformation process whereby the emergence of a strong center in a field of satellite chiefdoms results in a cumulative process whereby the strengthening of the center also redounds to the benefit of the regional entities, which are in turn able to exercise more control over their own subjects than they had done before. Schrieke imagines the process thus: "A change comes about in the character of the leaders of the primitive communities: henceforth they have not only to act as intermediaries for the will of the central authority . . . but the support of the central authority opens a possibility for them to advance from *primi inter pares* to being ruling notables insofar as they are capable of this" (p. 172). This possibility of the relatively autonomous local authorities enlarging their exercise of authority *pari passu* with the enlargement of the power of the central ruler and his royal domain is worth examining as an answer

to the emergence of certain historical polities out of a loose scattering of political aggregates. The logic of the development was that the leaders of these loose aggregates also became the representatives of higher authorities and were able with their backing to induce the inhabitants of their constituencies to accept a subordination that was previously not possible. A more indirect process was the manner in which small Malay coastal princedoms deliberately copied the ways of the more prestigious Javanese kingdoms on the one hand and on the other subjected inland peoples through trade, product dependence, and debtor bondage (p. 180).

Schrieke (no doubt benefiting from Weber's discussion of patrimonial domination) enumerated certain means by which the increased authority of the central government was enforced, means that are exactly paralleled elsewhere. A well-worn traditional method was the attempt to tighten dynastic links by marriage alliances, should the kingdom be composed of a number of smaller principalities in a state of loose coherence. Berg suggested the cultic aspect of such marriages in thirteenth–fourteenth century Java in that *tantric* ceremonies and coitus performed with the wives who were considered *yoginis* representing and embodying the essence (*prakerti*) of the four territorial *nusantaras* were believed to reinforce through sacral means – "in a divine unio mystica" – the king's ties with these *nusantaras* (Zoetmulder, in Soedjatmoko et al. 1975). But in more energetic and expansionary times, the king strove to neutralize the power of princes by appointing ministeriales of humble origins as provincial rulers; but in the long run they too became hereditary, and the ministeriales system did not escape decentralization. Another strategy was for the ruler to form his own hired guard of praetors whose task would be to make the king i ıdependent of his vassals. Schrieke gave a historical illustration of this attempted change from "a loose coherence" to a "state" system in the seventeenth-century Mataram empire.[22] Comparing the policies of Sultan Agung (1613–1646) and Mangkurat I (1646–1677), he points out the difference between the former's older policy of requiring autochthonous princes to remain at court and binding them to himself through marriage alliances, and Mangkurat's policy of destroying the princes, replacing them with closely supervised ministeriales, introducing a more effective system of enriching his coffers by farming out revenue collection to ministeriales in exchange for fixed annual sums, and by making trade with foreign lands a state monopoly.

But this process of incremental centralization was abortive. Schrieke gave a reason which in a way demarcates the limits of the traditional polity: This "attempt to form a state out of a society based on a goods economy and with an underdeveloped system of communications failed, as it had

[22] Schrieke defined the state as a type of political organization "in which the state prevents the disruption of component parts of the kingdom and makes the local notables more effective in its service" (1955, p. 173). Wertlıheim, in Soedjatmoko (1965), pp. 346–347, compares this description to Weber's "patrimonial bureaucratic state."

done everywhere else. It ended in a debacle, leaving the Dutch East India Company in command of a large part of Java" (p. 185).

Schrieke clearly had in mind a schematized evolutionary development from agrarian community to kingdom, and from kingdom to state (abortive in the Indonesian context not only because of Dutch colonial conquest but also because of certain internal limits and constraints of the traditional galactic polity). Besides the economic and logistical factors he adverted to, we might suggest here in a somewhat different manner the parameters of the traditional polity. We must refer back to the twin motors in the engine room: one being the rice-plains economy with a particular relation of people to land and the patterns of mobilization of their services and the other being the ruler's attempt to monopolize foreign trade, to tax riverine trade (and, in certain instances, to be a beneficiary of mining operations).

The first motor, which addressed itself to the extraction of agricultural goods, peasant labor (corvée), and military service, was more unwieldy and ramshackle than the theory would have us believe. In theory the king, raja, or sultan was "the lord of the land," "the lord of life" and so on; he distributed to his superior officials, both at the center and in the provinces, the rights over certain kinds of revenue collection and services in specified territories; the lesser officials in turn enjoyed from their superiors rights over smaller domains, and so on. In respect of these rights over land, in many a traditional polity a distinction was made between rights over territory and people attached to an office (i.e., nonhereditary rights unlike a fief) and similar rights alienated by a king or ruler to a subject as a private estate in perpetuity (or until confiscation). As regards Java of the later Mataram period, scholars have distinguished between "appanage" (*lunguh*) and "salary field" (*bengkok* or *tjatu*). An appanage has been defined as an assigned region where one has the right to gain from the land and from the inhabitants a profit, from which the king himself can draw a portion, but which gives no rights over the land itself. Taxes, fees, services, incomes from domains are examples of the profit accruing. A salary field by contrast was a piece of arable land that is part of the lands of the king and is assigned to an official, kinsman, or favored person. It is tilled by levy service to the benefit of the person granted (Moertono 1968, p. 117).

One picture of the formal land tenure system is from the top: It sees the hierarchy of rights as radiating outward from the center and from the apex downward to the lower rungs of the king's functionaries. But the entire picture changes when we look at the process of extraction from the bottom upward as a process of collection and creaming off at each successive level of officers, until what trickles into the king's treasury and warehouses is really a miniscule part of the gross produce and profits extracted at the ground level. To understand this process of how successive layers of political intermediaries slice off a portion of the revenue – a phenomenon that is remarkably similar to the small margins of profit successively appropriated by a chain of middlemen in contemporary peasant marketing

structures,[23] also revealing a close fit between administrative involution and agricultural involution – we must appreciate the mode of remuneration of officials and functionaries in the traditional polity. They appropriated a portion of the taxes they collected and the fees and fines they imposed, and commanded for their own use some of the corvée owed to the king.[24] Thus this process of collection and transmission of revenue upward made possible the support of a large number of functionaries but scarcely put in the hands of the king a large capital that derived from *outside* his royal domain, that is, from his provinces and satellite principalities. From these territories kings were able at the best of times to mobilize large-scale labor (corvée) for building palaces and religious monuments and as temporary armies to fight wars. But these were extraordinary projects, and the success of such mobilizations was highly variable in these pulsating kingdoms.[25]

The rice-growing, land-based sector of the economy could support an administrative system of replicated courts and redundant retinues, and could at special times provide massive labor pools and armies for brief periods of time, but could not put directly in the hands of the center large economic resources that it could disburse and manipulate and thereby control the recipients – it is because of this inadequacy that the monopolistic control of certain items of foreign imports and exports, and the direct taxation of other kinds of trade goods, was crucial in the emergence and maintenance of the Southeast Asian kingdoms. It is primarily through this sector of the economy that in Thailand the Ayutthaya-type polity (whose features persisted well into the early Bangkok period) achieved a transformation that in turn implicated the agricultural base.

It is thus appropriate having begun with the cosmological aspects of the traditional polity to conclude with its infrastructural basis, which consisted of a complementary linkage between riverine rice-growing settlements on the one side and politically controlled and monopolized foreign trade on the other.

It is the second aspect of trade that requires a brief gloss. That the emergence of the ancient kingdoms, and their physical location on strategic coastal points or on river mouths in Southeast Asia was importantly related to the impact of an explosive expansion of trade at the beginning of the Christian era is well attested. The sea lanes of the great maritime trade route extending from the Red Sea to South China, and operated by Arabs, Indians, indigenous entrepreneurs of the Malayan waters, and Chinese, connected the emergent polities with riparian economies and exchangeable

[23] See Dewey (1962), Geertz (1963), Mintz (1960).

[24] In Thailand the system of remuneration was called *kin muang* (to eat the *muang*). The governors of provinces and subordinate officials received no salary from the capital and were expected to appropriate a portion of the fees and taxes they collected.

[25] In my view, Polanyi's concept of "redistribution" as operating in such traditional "centric" polities is much too overworked and applied indiscriminately. In the polities I am discussing redistribution as a mechanism for the consumable agricultural surplus extracted appears not as elaborate as is commonly assumed.

commodities, luxuries, and rare products with one another. The earliest polities in existence by the third century A.D. were located in the valleys and plains of the lower Mekong (the central Vietnam of today) and on the Isthmian tracts of the Thai-Malay Peninsula.[26] Later, by the sixth century other polities had emerged in Sumatra and western Java, virtually all crystallizing along the maritime thoroughfare between India and China.[27] And in subsequent centuries "states predicated on similar principles came to occupy the Pyu country of central and upper Burma, the coastal plains of Arakan, the Mon lands around the lower courses of the Irawadi and Chao Phraya rivers, and other parts of Java and Sumatra. All, with the significant exception of some of the Javanese kingdoms were based in, and in most parts restricted to the lowlands."[28]

In their attempts to answer the riddle of the primary determinants of the emergence of these Southeast Asian polities, most writers have highlighted the impact of the activities of trading entrepreneurs and warrior adventurers and of the consecratory and ideological roles of the brahman priesthood that accompanied them. The resources, in terms of luxury goods for redistribution, arms and weapons for strategic use of force, new ideas and concepts for representing new political horizons, which trade must have put in the hands of the newly emergent rulers and their satellites, are without question. But I also would like to insist that the riparian communities practicing rice agriculture, whose scale and density of settlement probably kept pace with the expansion of the trading sector, were an equally indispensable factor, in that they supported a stratum of rulers and a network of ceremonial centers and religious foundations, provided labor for the projects of warfare and monument building, and, not to be minimized, collected and channeled to the center those forest products, spices, minerals (especially gold), and handicraft products that foreign traders avidly sought.

The vast distance from the early centuries of the Christian era to the late nineteenth century did not efface in Southeast Asia the importance of trade and rice cultivation in the petty chiefdoms and sultanates (that would soon be engulfed by colonial conquest). For example, Gullick paints this general picture of the Malay polities of that time:

> The territory comprised in a State was related to the geographical structure of the peninsula and to the use of rivers as the main lines of communication and trade. A State was typically the basin of a large river or (less often) of a group of adjacent rivers, forming a block of land extending from the coast inland to

[26] Wheatley (1961), Briggs (1951), Coedès (1966).

[27] For example, Wolters says this of the maritime empire of Srivijaya, based in southeastern Sumatra: "Srivijaya, sometimes in control of territory on the Malay peninsula, has been ascribed a career from the seventh to the fourteenth century, spanning much of the history of Asian maritime trade and responsible in no small measure for its expansion by providing efficient harbour facilities for merchants making the long voyage between Middle East and China" (1970, p. 1).

[28] Wheatley (n.d.), "Satyanrta in Suvarnadvipa" (unpublished).

the central watershed. The capital of the State was the point at which the main river ran into the sea. At this point the ruler of the State could control the movement of all persons who entered or left his State, he could defend it from external attack and he could levy taxes on its imports and exports (1958, p. 21).

(Perhaps the most historic of the Malay sultanates, the Malacca sultanate, was a compact centralized polity that lived on the foreign trade of its port; it perhaps approaches Polanyi's conception of "the port of trade," which mediated between and serviced agriculture-based kingdoms). Gullick leaves us in no doubt as to the importance of tin mining for the maintenance of the Malay polities: "Malay chiefs taxed tin mines in various ways and thus diverted into their own hands from a fifth to a third of the value of the output. Revenue from tin was the mainstay of the Malay political system" (p. 6).

The importance of the river system for location of agricultural settlements, for transport and trade, for the Thai kingdoms of Sukhodaya and, even more significantly, Ayutthaya needs no underlining. We shall, however, have more to say later of how the increasing stabilization and cumulative centralization of the Thai kingdom in the Bangkok era contributed in large part to the expansion of trade, and of the manner in which the agricultural sector articulated with it.

8. The Kingdom of Ayutthaya: Design and Process

We shall now focus on the Ayutthayan kingdom in order to elaborate further a few critical features that we have come to associate with the galactic polity. Ayutthaya, by virtue of its larger magnitude when compared with Sukhodaya[1] and its alleged utilization of political concepts and blueprints of Cambodian origin, contributes more complex features to the structure and form of the galactic polity than did Sukhodaya.

Wales' account (1934) of Siamese government and administration – centered primarily on Ayutthaya – rests on the historical supposition that it was during the rule of King Paramatrailokanatha (1448–1488) that a "great metamorphosis" in the system of government was achieved: A new system of ranking and administrative organization was introduced as a result of Khmer influence, and the conversion of "feudal nobles into government officials took place" (p. 33). Wales emphasizes that the reforms were made possible "by the influx of Khmer officials and literati after the sack of Angkor Thom by King Paramaraja in A.D. 1431" (p. 70).

While we can accept that Ayutthayan administration and political conceptions show an elaboration in the second half of the fifteenth century (as evidenced by the Palatine Law of 1458 and the Laws of Civil and Military Hierarchy of 1454), we should not think that Khmer influence suddenly flooded Ayutthaya for the first time with the conquest of Angkor. Khmer influence was a longstanding and deep-seated one in the whole region from pre-Sukhodaya and pre-Ayutthaya times, the local kingdoms having themselves been at various times Khmer provinces.

For convenience of exposition I shall first deal with the overall territorial layout of the Ayutthaya polity (what Wales calls "provincial administration") and show its conformance with certain mandala features of the galactic polity; thereafter, I shall deal with the organization of administration fanning outward from the king at the center of the system (what Wales calls "central administration") and attempt to show that it too is

[1] Wales estimates the Sukhodayan kingdom as varying from about 10,000 square miles during the greater part of its brief existence "to the considerably more than 200,000 square miles that, inclusive of tributaries, formed the somewhat overgrown kingdom during the more prosperous portions that followed its achievement of centralized administration" (1934, p. 5).

built upon principles of arrangement consistent with the galactic form. Finally, I shall postulate what are the underlying politico-social relations that underpin the cosmological plan of the polity and thus seek to bring into correspondence cosmological notions with on-the-ground political formations and processes.

Territorial Arrangement as Galaxy

The Ayutthayan kingdom in one form or another existed from 1350 to 1767, and this stretch of time was punctuated by two great defeats at the hands of the Burmese, the first in 1569 and the second in 1767, when it was abandoned as the capital domain.

I shall for the purpose of illustration give the territorial arrangement of the kingdom at two points of time: roughly between 1460 and 1590 and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries after King Naresvara's reforms (regnal years 1590–1605).

The Ayutthayan Polity Circa 1460–1590

Figure 8.1 is a schematic representation of the polity, so drawn as to represent the distinctive notion that the polity was composed of a grouping round a center: At the core is the royal domain (*vaṅ rajadhani*)[2] with the capital city of Ayutthaya; this core region is surrounded by certain principalities or provinces ruled by princes or appointed governors; at the outer rim are situated the alien polities or kingdoms (*moaṅ pradhesa raja*), consisting of principalities such as Chiangmai, Nan, and so on, in the north, the numerous Malay kingdoms in the south, the Burmese polities in the west, the Laotian in the northeast, and Cambodia in the southeast.

It is Wales' thesis that in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, during King Paramatrailokanatha's (Trailok) reign, the Ayutthayan kingdom changed dramatically in its principles of organization (especially in the relations of corvée service), of central administration, and of territorial arrangement.

We shall focus on the third feature first. There was apparently a change in magnitude of the core region, the royal domain itself, as compared with earlier times (when it roughly corresponded to the dimensions of the Sukhodaya polity).

A change was "necessitated by the expansion of the king's direct authority over the provinces adjoining the small area of land surrounding the capital which alone previously had been responsible to the king" (Wales 1934, p. 70). Apparently, the *vaṅ rajadhani* (*rachathani*) was enlarged by bringing "the four provinces" of the older model under the direct control

[2] I am once again following Wales' transcription of these labels and concepts without the diacritical marks, preserving only the velar *-ng* represented by a dot above letters.

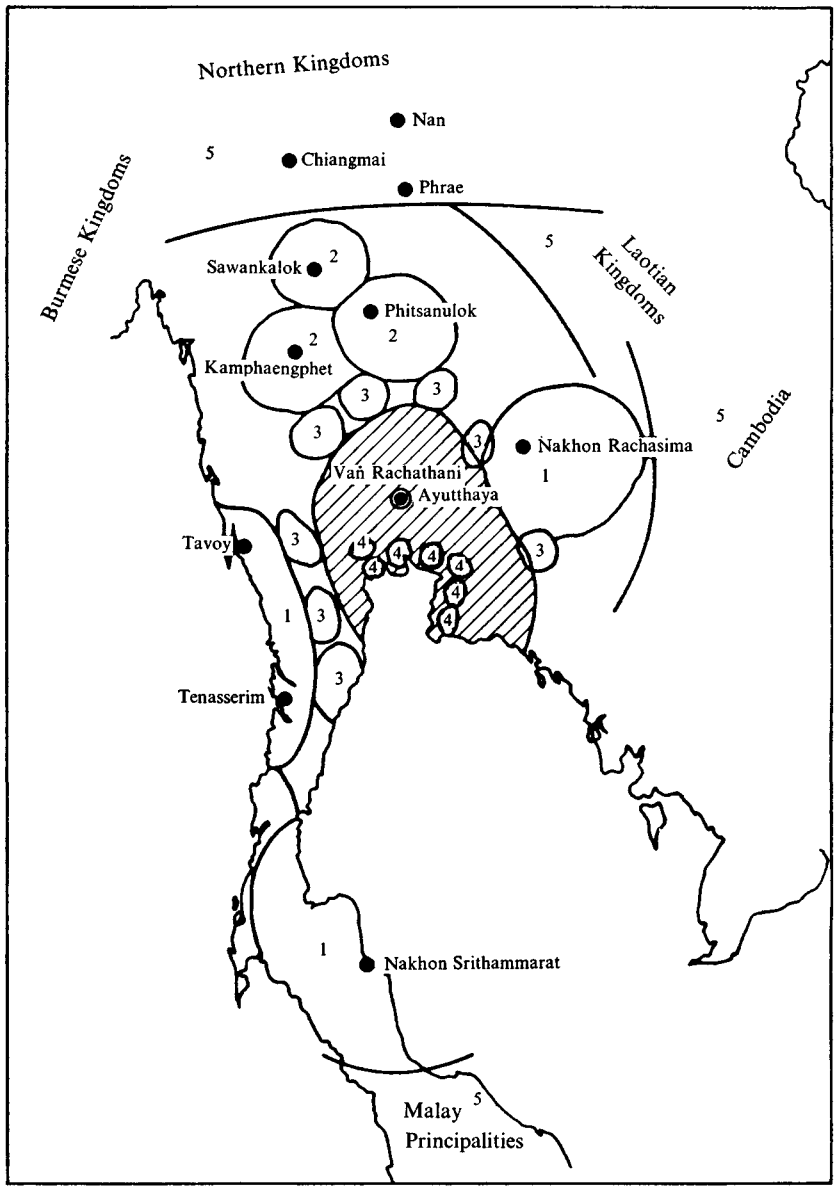


Figure 8.1. The Ayutthayan polity (c. 1460–1590).

Key:
- *Van Rajadhani* (*Van Rachathani*): the royal domain of Ayutthaya.
- 1 *Brahyamahanagara* (*Phra Mahanakhon*): major province/principality
- 2 *Moan Luk Hlvan* (*Muang Luk Luang*): provinces ruled by sons of king
- 3 *Moan Hlan Hlvan* (*Muang Lan Luang*): provinces ruled by grandsons/nephews of king
- 4 *Moan Noi* (*Muang Noi*): small provinces comprising the *Van Rachathani*
- 5 *Moan Pradhesa Raja*: foreign (independent) kingdoms

of the capital; interestingly, it was then internally divided into lesser or small provinces (*moaṅ noi*) (*muang noi*), later called fourth-class provinces. These lesser provinces were administered by officials who were directly responsible to the *senapati* or ministers who were resident in the capital.

This expanded central region was surrounded by various subjugated regions that were governed as independent principalities (which were replicas on a smaller scale of the capital domain) but owing allegiance to Ayutthaya, the center. These surrounding principalities/provinces were labeled and constituted in two ways:

1. The *moaṅ luk hlvaṅ* (*muang luk luang*), literally the principalities of the children of the king (also referred to as *moaṅ ek*, i.e., first-class principalities), were indeed in theory ruled by the king's sons of first-class *cau fa* (*chao fa*) status. The principalities that fit this description were three in number located to the north of the capital of Ayutthaya and previously comprised a major part of the old Sukhodaya kingdom. They were Bisnuloka (Phitsanulok), Svargaloka (Sawankalok) and Kambenbejra (Kamphaengphet).

2. The *brahyamahanagara* (*phra mahanakhon*) were four in number. These were Nagara Rajasima (Nakhon Rachasima) in the east, formerly in Cambodian control, now ruled by a high official; Tenasserim and Tavoy in the west, also ruled by high officials, and continually contended for with the Burmese; finally, Nagara Sri Dharmaraja (Nakhonsrithammarat) in the south, a historic principality that was different from others in that it was ruled by a local hereditary prince. Historically, it is this last principality that gives us some of the best evidence of how a more or less autonomous province reproduces the conceptions and administrative arrangements of the central or capital domain (see Wales 1934; Rabibhadana 1969).

In general, one could say of all the major provinces that their princely governors maintained professional armies constituted on lines similar to that of the king and that these armies, though reduced in scale, retained the same form under the official governors later in the seventeenth century (Wales, p. 141).

We must now allude to a category of province that fell between the *rajadhani* and the surrounding major provinces described previously. They were appositely called *moaṅ hlaṅ hlvaṅ* (*muang lan luang*), literally provinces ruled by nephews or grandsons of the king; these provinces (also referred to as *moaṅ do*, i.e., second-class provinces) are typically described as situated in between the central domain and the major provinces and ruled by *cau fa* princes of second class. Wales does not report their names, number or precise location.

Finally, a comment on the foreign "independent" polities on the perimeter of Ayutthaya: of these, according to the Palatine Law of 1458, the northern polities of Chiangmai, Chiang Saen, Chiangrai, Phrae, Nan, and so on, as well as the peninsular Malay states to the south such as Johore and Malacca, stood in a tributary relationship to Ayutthaya. In Ayutthayan

times, a similar relationship was intermittently established with Cambodia, while of course in Burma was located the major contesting enemy who eventually destroyed the kingdom.

Ayutthaya in the Seventeenth Century (King Naresvara's time (1590–1605) and Later)

Apparently, King Paramatrailokanatha's scheme persisted for about 130 years but came under stress in the last 25 years because of Burmese invasions and resultant partial and temporary domination by this enemy. When Thai power had reestablished itself in Ayutthaya under Naresvara (Naresuan), a further stage in the centralization of power was sought to be reached through these measures:

1. *Cau fa* princes who had often rebelled and whose power was considered dangerous to the king were superseded by high officials appointed by the king. These appointed governors were obliged to drink the water of allegiance.

2. Those major provinces and principalities outside the royal domain, the *vaṅ rajadhani,* previously labeled as *brahyamahanagara* and *moaṅ luk hlvaṅ,* were now constituted into three classes of provinces called *moaṅ ek* (first class), *moaṅ do* (second class), and *moaṅ tri* (third class). Incidentally, this rationalized classification persisted well into the nineteenth century until it was abolished by King Rama V. According to the Law of the Provincial Hierarchy, which is thought to reflect best the conditions that prevailed in the eighteenth century, the identity of the provinces was as follows:

a. There were two first-class provinces, namely, Bisnuloka (Phitsanulok) in the north and Nagara Sri Dharmaraja (Nakhon Srithammarat) in the south.

b. There were six second-class provinces, namely, Svargaloka (Sawankalok), Sukhodaya, Kambenbejra (Kamphaengphet), Bejapurana (Phetburi), Nagara Rajasima (Nakhon Rachasima), and Tenasserim.

c. Third-class provinces numbered seven: Bijaya (Phicai), Bicitra (Phichit), Nagara Svarga (Nakhonsawan), Candapurana (Chantaburi), Jaiya (Chaiya), Batalun (Phatalung), and Jumbhara (Chumphon).

d. Fourth-class provinces were eminently the units that composed the royal domain (*vaṅ rajadhani*) (though apparently there were also instances of similarly ranked units being attached to some of the other provinces).

De La Loubère, writing at the end of the seventeenth century, made the interesting observation that there were 34 fourth-class provinces under the control of the capital; this is corroborated by the Law of the Provincial Hierarchy, which mentions 33. The number 33 may well be in correspondence with cosmological ideas of grouping around a center (e.g., 33, 37), which I have previously discussed.

Figure 8.2 gives the location of the main and provincial capitals with the class of the province given by a number (1, 2, 3, or 4) designating the new classification. Making the adjustments for the shape of the country, we

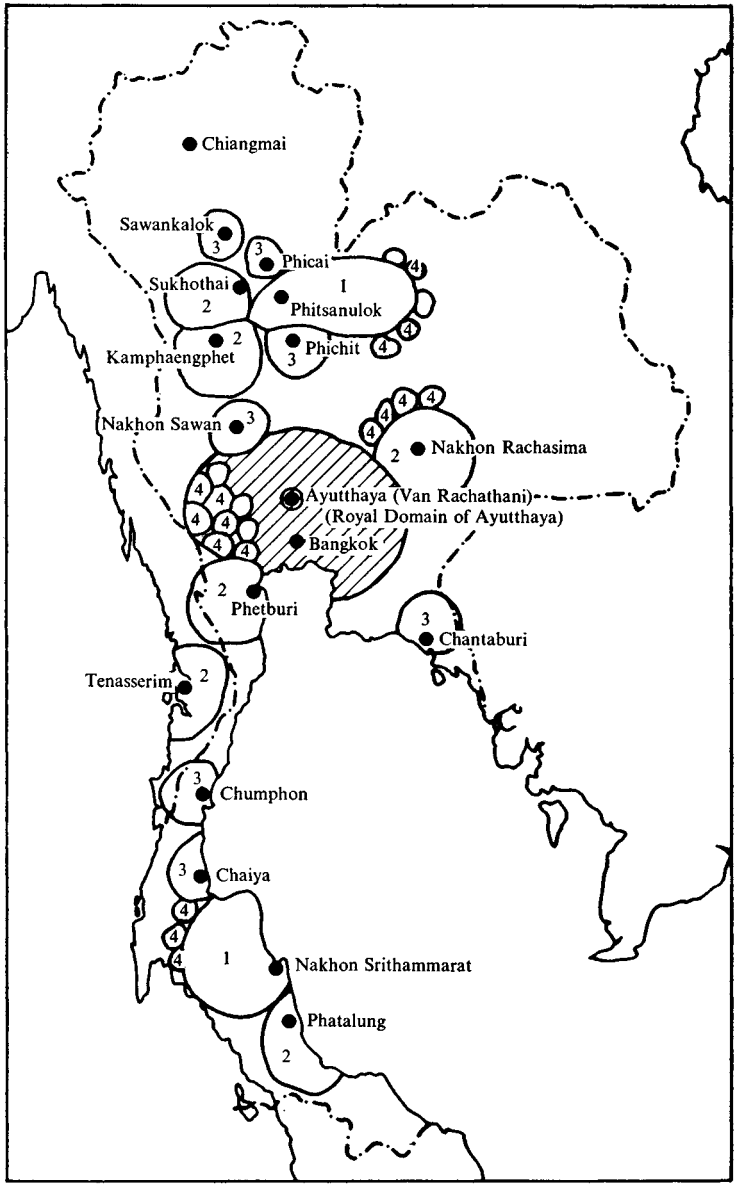


Figure 8.2. The Ayutthayan polity in the seventeenth century.
Key: —·— Present borders of Thailand (1975).
▨ *Vaṅ Rachathani:* royal domain of Ayutthaya
1 First-class provinces
2 Second-class provinces
3 Third-class provinces
4 Fourth-class provinces, being primarily 33 units in number composing the *Vaṅ Rachathani;* also located on borders of major provinces

can see a galactic logic to the distribution of provinces, the dominant core being the capital province of Ayutthaya and the two largest satellites being Bisnuloka and Nagara Sri Dharmaraja.[3]

Administrative Organization from the Center Onward

Having described the territorial arrangement of the polity, we can now broach the administrative arrangements. It could be said that the fundamental tensions, if not contradictions, of the galactic polity were reflected at two levels: in the push and pull between the center and its provinces and in the dynamics of leader and retinue or follower relations (whether the leaders be the king, the princes, or officials of noble status), which continually distorted and threw out of alignment the formal hierarchies and symmetries of ranks and administrative departments.

It is the second tension that interests us here. The formal administrative pattern can best be elucidated with a set of concepts I have assembled in order to portray the logic of the traditional Thai scheme.

1. The concepts dual classification, bifurcation, and bipartition I shall use interchangeably to denote the propensity to divide phenomena or to group things and persons into two classes or divisions. This dual description sometimes implies that there is a center or central position in relation to which objects or persons are divided into two classes (i.e., a triadic scheme) and at other times implies the notion of halves irrespective of a center.

2. The relation between the dual classes or bipartitioned groups can be one of two types – *asymmetry* or *parallelism*. In the asymmetrical case, one class may be ranked higher than the other; for instance, the left hand may be rated inferior to the right hand, the outer inferior to the inner, upriver superior to downriver, and so on. Parallelism expresses more a relation of equality or symmetry, the two halves being slightly distinguished from each other by name variations or slight differences in function or by other substitutive or redundant devices. (A classic example of parallelism is Jakobson's exposition of "compulsory parallelism" between adjacent lines, as, for example, in biblical poetry or in the Finnic and, to some extent, the Russian oral traditions).[4]

[3] Vickery (1970) gives a summary of the contents of the Palatine Law and the Law on Military and Provincial Ranks in the form in which they were reproduced in Rama I's revised law code in 1805 at the very beginning of the Chakkri dynasty. The details confirm and reinforce our picture of the galactic polity, both as regards territorial layout and administrative organization.

The Palatine Law makes the inflated claim that 20 states, which included large areas of Burma, Laos, and the Malay Peninsula, offered the tribute of gold and silver flowers to the Thai ruler. It also lists 8 *mahanakhon* (great cities) whose rulers drank the water of allegiance – 7 of these *nakhon* also qualify as first- or second-class provinces. The number of provinces of all classes is the same as I have listed previously. It is noteworthy that most of what is called northeastern Thailand is not mentioned.

[4] In his "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in *Selected Writings*, Mouton, 1971, Vol. II, Jakobson refers to the manipulation of two

3. Finally, dual classification with its asymmetrical or parallel evaluations, especially when it occurs in relation to a central position, is a component of a larger system or unity. Thus, for example, right- and left-hand categories may themselves be oriented not only in relation to the center, but also in relation, say, to the vertical dimension of above and below and to the cardinal points calibrated as four, eight, or a larger number of positions. Such schemes comprising dynamic, complex, and relativistic systems of classification expressing both unity and differentiation by systematically using dichotomous devices are not unknown in both great and little, centralized and tribal societies alike. Two excellent examples in point are Granet's essay "Right and Left in China" and Clark Cunningham's "Order in the Atoni House," both conveniently brought together, with other essays, in Needham (1973).

These two sample paragraphs from Granet eloquently make my point, and also incidentally give me the opportunity to place dualism within larger *systems* of categorization that employ directions, lateral and vertical scales, concentric circles and squares and their centers, and other building blocks:

1. But here, now, are the consequences as far as the human body is concerned. Part of the Earth is missing to the west, whereas the Sky is deficient to the east. The Sky is the Above, the Earth is the Below. Now the human body is composed of an above and a below. The head (round) represents the Sky, the feet (rectangular) represent the Earth which they touch. (This is the reason that it has long been forbidden for Chinese sovereigns to display in their court dancers doing the head-stand, for to perform this is precisely to turn the world upside down.) Since the head is the Sky, there is a deficiency in the head, as in the Sky, to the west, whereas close to the Earth, in the lower part of the body, there is a deficiency to the east. It is enough to know that there is an equivalence between west and right, and between east and left, to see that the right eye must be less good than the left eye, the left ear better than the right ear, and that inversely man must favor the right as far as the feet are concerned – and also the hands.

2. When the Chief holds a reception, his court is drawn up facing him. The arrangement of the vassals in court assemblies serves to mark the different regions of space. Among the vassals there are three who are as it were a projection of the Chief: these are called the Three Dukes. This trinity represents the Chief: his left and his right, plus the Center. The three dukes, whose mission is to double for the Chief, are oriented, even though they are vassals, as is the Chief himself: they are considered as facing south, and consequently the duke of the left is the first among them. He governs over the East, i.e., the left of the world, and is thus the most honored of the three.

But the collectivity of vassals are opposed to the Chief. They are considered as actually facing the north. Since the east is the left of the Chief, and since the left is the honorable side, the east will be the side of honor for the vassals

kinds of connection (similarity and contiguity) in both their aspects (positional and semantic) in the production of parallelism.

who are placed facing the Chief; among them, the most highly honored will therefore be he who is on the right, and the inversion is thereby absolute.

Vassals do not stay all the time at the court; they travel. But when they are on the road they do not at all abandon their attitude as vassals: just as the Chief marches with his face always towards the south, so the vassals always face north. The side of honor thus remains for them the right and hence the west. It will be seen that etiquette, by a pleasing *tour de force*, has succeeded in combining the two principal formulas of classification: the inferior placed to the south and facing north, and the male placed to the west and facing east. The vassal takes the west (right) part of the road, where he marches under the influence of the east. The eastern (left) part of the road is reserved exclusively for women, who there receive the influence of the west.

To cite a further example nearer home, Heine-Geldern had this to say of the combination of "a system based on the compass" with the principle of dual classification:

Throughout the kingdoms of Farther India the system based on the compass was largely supplemented and modified by the division into offices of the right and left hand, right and left in this case referring to the place on the side of the king due to the respective office bearer on ceremonial occasions. As the king, when sitting on the throne, always faced the East, right corresponded to the South and left to the North. In Siam, for instance, there were a major and a lesser queen each of the right and of the left. Civilian officers had their places on the left of the king, officers of the army on his right, i.e., in the South, because the planet Mars, connected with war, was considered to be the planet of the South. Indeed, the population of Siam was divided into the two classes of the right (South) and of the left (North). The former had to render military and the latter civilian services (1956, pp. 4–5).

It is my thesis here that Ayutthayan principles of administrative arrangement are better understood in terms of these concepts than in terms of concepts such as rational bureaucracy, functional specialization, and the like. This implies a serious deviation from Wales' assumptions and explication and, up to a point, a genuine sympathy for Riggs' counterinterpretation (although, as we shall see later, we think it necessary to put Riggs' wide-eyed cosmological perspective in its place).

Riggs' Interpretation of the Traditional Polity in Thailand

Riggs (1967) is certainly plausible in questioning the rationalistic analytic language of Wales, which is repeated by several Thai scholars (Vella, Mosel, Wilson, Siffin), that King Trailok, influenced by Khmer concepts, introduced in the mid-fifteenth century a "centralized and functionally specialized administrative organization," that *krom* were basic "departments" of administration that had both "territorial and functional responsibilities," which in time were subjected to considerable blurring and overlap. Legitimately querying whether the Siamese were conscious of the

conceptual distinction between territorial and functional orientations in organizational practice, whether they similarly distinguished between the civil and the military as separate functions, Riggs advances a cosmological viewpoint for which he finds precedent in Heine-Geldern.

This cosmological viewpoint, which postulates a correspondence between the microcosmic world of men and the macrocosmic universe of gods, entails that the role of the monarch, the design of his palace, and the pattern of his bureaucratic organization are determined by concepts unrelated to rationalistic orientations.

> Indeed, the design of palaces so as to match the universal order provides an architectural framework within which the organization of government takes form. From this standpoint it is not functional or territorial criteria which determine architectural patterns; rather, it is the structure of the palace which shapes the conduct of its inhabitants. Each wing or court of the palace had its corresponding officials, and the salient characteristic of each office, therefore, was its location, or better, its topological identity. Consequently, such categories as east and west, right and left, center, rear, and front are more germane to the traditional perspective than any particular function or domain which may, in the course of time, come to be associated with a given palace or court (p. 71).

Thus Riggs seems to be arguing that the topography of the "palace, court and chambers" may provide the cosmological basis for the organization of the administration and that the concept *krom* be given a gloss in these terms. Riggs' reconstruction of the cosmological design is worth close scrutiny.

He suggests that the Siamese term *krom* be translated not as "department," but rather by a number of words such as "palace," "court," and "chamber," which suggest architectural locations, and that the place and role of the front and back palaces (*wang na* and *wang lang*), of the two divisions, Mahathai and Kalahom (usually rendered north and south divisions of the entire country), of the major ministries and subordinate departments (*krom*) can be placed within a single architectural-cosmological scheme (in which the territorial and functional aspects of bureaucratic activity are incidental and derivative).

The front and back palaces, the occupant of the former being the *uparat* (heir apparent), are fitted into the *krom* design thus:

> We know how strictly hierarchic was the status system of the Siamese, with its elaborate *sakdi na* numerical grading scale, applying to everyone from the king himself to the meanest slave. What is more natural than that the king, at the center of the palace, should hold the highest cosmological position? Since, when enthroned, he faced the East, it is apparent that the front (eastern) palace would have the next highest rank and should be occupied by a prince second in status only to the monarch himself. The third place would go to the rear (western) palace. The incumbents of these palaces would have so exalted a rank that it would be improper to call upon them to administer the affairs of lower mortals; accordingly, their chief work came to be the care of their royal heads. Other palaces or courts, in descending order, would be assigned succes-

sively more humble duties, whose territorial and functional aspects might be quite undifferentiated.

Next, Riggs tackles the pre-Trailok and post-Trailok administrative arrangements radiating from the king and capital outward, and I quote his solution *in extenso:*

It appears that from the beginning of the Ayuthian period (A.D. 1350) until the reforms of Trailok a century later, there had been a relatively simple four-court organization of government, known as the *Klang, Wang, Muang,* and *Na.* The heads of these courts were called *Senabodi.* It is not definite that the four courts consisted architecturally of buildings oriented to the points of the compass around the king's palace, although this may well have been the case. They may have been thought of as a series of concentric circles, which makes sense if we recall the sequence of annular seas (or moats) surrounding the palace in the ideal image of Mount Meru. The word *klang* apparently means center, and this court was, appropriately enough, charged with responsibility for the royal treasury. The second court, *wang,* became identified with the palace; the *muang* with the royal city; and the *na,* the outlying countryside.

It is worth noting that the four courts, which had Sino-Thai names previously, were given Sanscrit-derived (through Pali) names after Trailok's reforms, as shown below. The transcriptions by Wales are given after transliterations which come closer to current Thai orthography.

English	*Sino-Thai* (early forms)[5]	*Sanscritized* (15th century)
Treasury	Klang (Glaṅ)	Kosatibawdi (Kosādhipatī)
Palace	Wang (Vaṅ)	Thammatikorn (Dharmādhipatī)
Capital	Muang (Mo'aṅ) or Wiang	Nakornban (Nagarapāla)
Countryside	Na (Nā)	Kasetrabawdi (Ksetrādhipatī
	(after 1532)	Bolathep (Baladebā)

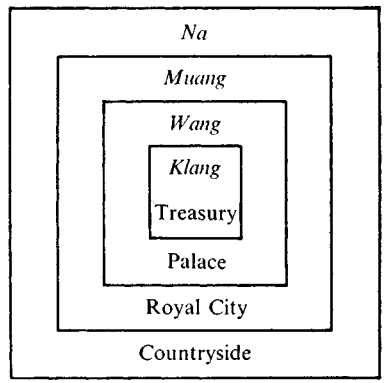


Figure 8.3. Hypothetical plan of the four courts.

[5] Riggs is mistaken in using the expression "Sino-Thai," since Thai is not a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Note that *klang* literally means "center" and *wiang* "capital town"; also that the Sanskrit names are those of officials, for example, master of the treasury, and of the law, guardian of the city/capital, master of the realm/deity of strength (S. J. T.).

In the Khmer-influenced reforms of Trailok, the bilateral division of right and left came to play an important part. . . . Assuming that the front and rear palaces came to play a predominantly ceremonial and ritual function, serving the royal family, the palaces of the right (south) and of the left (north) could well have become the dominant instrumentalities of administration. The southern palace was known as *Kalahom*, the northern as *Mahadthai*. The heads of these palaces were called *Akkhramaha Senabodi*.

Just as the four courts of the earlier period had acquired territorial-functional duties, so the new palaces also acquired novel roles. The population was split into two divisions, the "right" and the "left," whose members were equally distributed throughout the realm. These divisions did not correspond, then, to territorial jurisdictions; members of both divisions lived side by side. We might think of them as "right-ers" and "left-ers." Logically enough, *Kalahom*, as the palace of the right, was assigned authority over the right-ers, and *Mahadthai* took control over the left-ers. The terms here obviously do not imply political tendencies, but, as in the case of the French chamber of deputies, physical location came to have a functional meaning. In the Siamese case, however, the significance moved toward a military-civil distinction. We may formulate the following equations:

Kalahom = right (southern) palace = right-ers (military)
Mahadthai = left (northern) palace = left-ers (civil)

Wales assumes that the *Kalahom* was a kind of "defense department" and the *Mahadthai* a "home" or "interior" ministry. But this may be to impute undue functional differentiation to the palaces. It is clear that the royal officials, from the king himself on down, undertook both to lead military campaigns and to conduct civil-type activities. Ordinary freemen were, for much of the time, farmers; but while on corvée duty, they might be called on to serve in non-military capacities or to fight in a campaign. Thus, in time of war – which was frequent – every freeman was liable to military duty, as were all officials, both right-ers and left-ers. In peacetime, however, it may have been the practice to call on right-ers, under *Kalahom*, to take part in relatively permanent guard – hence "military" – duties. In war time, *Mahadthai* may have played a more important part than *Kalahom*, since left-ers were free to join the campaign, whereas right-ers could not be spared from their local security (militia) duties. Alternatively, it is contended that both divisions did guard duty and fought in wars. The distinction may have been used mainly for purposes of enlistment and command.

Over the course of time, the role of the two lateral palaces changed. This change was probably related to the territorial extension of the royal domain. At first, the authority of the *senabodi* was, as Wales observes, confined to the area within the Ratcha Thani, or territory ruled directly from the capital, the "royal domain." Outside this area, the lords of the fiefs (or Lands) each held miniature courts in which, on a smaller scale, the cosmological organization of the royal court was duplicated. But gradually, during the Ayuthian period, the royal domain grew, and the populations brought under the jurisdiction of the two palaces increased. As this happened, the royal palaces imposed their direct supervision over their counterpart palaces in the march lands. Wales reports that, at the end of the seventeenth century, it was found desirable, "in order to obtain a unified command of all the men available for service in that part of

the country, to place those of both civil and military divisions [left-ers and right-ers] in the southern provinces under the control of the *Kalahom;* while in the same way the *Mahatdaiya* commanded men of both divisions in the northern provinces." This arrangement persisted into the nineteenth century, with the result that Europeans came to refer to the Mahadthai as the "Minister of the North," and the Kalahom as "Minister of the South." Each controlled all provincial matters concerned with war, justice and finance in his part of the country.

With the expansion of the royal domain, a further refinement of the right-left division also took place. Each of the great chambers acquired two subsidiary chambers, one charged with responsibility for the conscription of freemen for compulsory service in the outer provinces of its territory, and the other with the same work in the inner area. This development was, however, not peculiar to the great chambers. . . .

In dealing with the bilateral system in Siamese organization, we have passed over the original four-chamber system which as noted above seems to have antedated the reforms of Trailok. This older system did not disappear, but was simply combined with the new, thereby illustrating the capacity of the Siamese to innovate by combining new and old structures. While the heads of the two palaces were known as the *Akkhramaha Senabodi,* the *senabodi* who headed the four older courts became known as the *Chatusadom,* or the four supports. Thawatt, on the basis of a review of the available Thai literature as well as of Wales and other Western writers, has concluded that the four *senabodi* were made responsible to the *Mahadthai* in all matters concerning members of the left division, and to the *Kalahom* in all matters concerning the right.

This interpretation seems more reasonable than the following offered by Wales: "The four *senapati* were no doubt at first under the control of . . . the head of the civil division . . . since . . . there were four general officers, each originally in command of one of the four divisions of the army, who were under the command . . . of the military division." It seems more likely to me that the civil-military distinction is an anachronistic reinterpretation, in functional terms, of a subsequent evolution of the offices. Perhaps, over a period of time, *Mahadthai* was able to exercise more control over the four senabodi than *Kalahom,* and the latter thereupon created somehow a shadowy counterpart of its own. Whatever the explanation, the fact is that by the Bangkok period there were six *senabodi,* the original four courts, and two of the later palaces. If the Wales interpretation were correct, we would expect to find ten *senabodi,* two "chief ministers," each with four dependent "ministers" or "generals."

According to my interpretation of the situation, there were two prime sets of four, the original four courts being succeeded by a subsequent set of four palaces. However, the second set was differentiated into two pairs: the *Wang Na* (front or east palace) and the *Wang Lang* (rear or west palace) became specialized for the honoring of the highest princes, whereas the *Kalahom* (right or south palace) and the *Mahadthai* (left or north palace) became specialized for higher administrative duties, beginning with the registration and control of the right-ers and left-ers throughout the administered population.

Meanwhile, the four courts continued their older duties, but each came under the domination of the two new palaces insofar as right-ers and left-ers, respectively, were concerned. Later, then, *Mahadthai* began to control the four courts

more effectively than *Kalahom*. Moreover, as the domain brought under central control by Bangkok expanded, *Mahadthai* began to exercise more authority in the new northern territories, and *Kalahom* in the south. Thus, the directional designations which had initially been merely cosmological became eventually territorial.

This pattern of change becomes more reasonable when we also take into account the fact that both princes and commoners were assigned to every palace, court, and chamber. Although the initial rank of a prince might affect his assignment to a *krom*, it was also apparent that the rank of a *krom* affected or reinforced the rank of the prince. Only princes of the first and second rank – there was usually just one of each – could be named to *Wang Na* and *Wang Lang*, respectively. The commoners assigned to each *krom* became eventually, if they were not initially, the retainers of its prince and provided support for his establishment. Since the number of clients and the value of the income provided for its incumbent varied with the rank of the *krom*, it can be seen that the appointments carried practical as well as ceremonial advantages.

In matters of royal succession, we can assume that only the highest princes, and therefore the incumbents of *Wang Na* and *Wang Lang*, were actively considered. Hence, these palaces became strongly oriented toward the king and the affairs of the royal family. By contrast, the princes assigned to other *kroms* were not likely to become candidates for succession, and therefore these palaces and courts became more concerned with public administrative matters. Normally, however, it was not the prince himself who took leadership in these questions, but the chief commoner or noble in his entourage. This may explain why two of the new palaces became the leading *krom* for public administration, whereas the other two became identified with the royal household.

So far we have looked only at the palaces and courts. We have yet to mention the chambers. It appears that during the period of the Trailok reforms, a set of six chambers were established, headed by *montri*. They were assigned such duties as the administration of Buddhist affairs, control of the royal apparel and insignia, the registration of clients, guarding the palace, a royal secretariat, and a supplementary treasury. Wales notes that the six chambers reported directly to the king, not through the four courts of the two palaces. He adds that there were "a large number" of minor *kroms*, but for the most part these seem to have been dependent on one of the major *kroms*. Wales also tells us that "many of these dependent *krams*[6] show dual organization, there being *krams* of the left and right, each having a slightly different function but both remaining closely related."

The pattern of governmental organization, viewed from this perspective, was designed neither for territorial administration nor to carry out a set of functionally differentiated activities. Rather it corresponded to the cosmologically oriented palace architecture, with a proliferation of minor chambers surrounding, in geometrical fashion, a core complex of palaces and courts. The subsequent assignment of duties possessing both territorial and functional attributes which overlapped each other gave each *krom*, over a period of time, a distinctive range of duties, with their territorial aspect sometimes predominating, their functional aspects prevailing at other times. But the exact duties assigned to each *krom* must have been viewed by the kings and the incumbents themselves

[6] Wales' *kram* is the same as our *krom*.

as matters of expediency and tradition, rather than as inherent in the constitution of each office.

Quite naturally the tasks carried out by any court or chamber "varied from time to time," as Wales remarks. Such variations no doubt reflected the predispositions and capabilities of the incumbents of each *krom* and their mutual rivalries, as well as conscious efforts by the kings to strengthen the hands of their most loyal supporters and weaken those in whom they had less confidence. In this sense, traditional Thai politics and administration can be seen as a nexus of power and authority flowing from the king to and among a congeries of palaces, courts, and chambers, each somewhat autonomous and a rival of all the others, yet linked together by patterns of mutual dependence and hierarchically structured but mobile linkages of deference and prestige.

Riggs' design is a fine explication of some of the formal features of the central administrative structure in the galactic polity according to my usage – there is the directional and concentric location of palaces and major *krom;* the bilateral division of right and left, north and south; the dual categorization with an *asymmetrical* ranking as in the case of the six major *krom* (courts) headed by *senabodi* and the six lesser *krom* (chambers), headed by *montri* (see Figure 8.4); and the replication connoting *parallelism.*[7]

In fact more examples of dual categorization – of creating diverging lines or parts from a center by the process of bipartitioning – can be added to Riggs' enumeration: (1) Normally, the king is said to have four queens, a greater and lesser of the left and a greater and lesser of the right, with the right position being more honorable than the left (asymmetrical dual categories). (2) The subordinate administrative units seem to have been constituted on the principle of parallelism. Wales reports: "Many of these dependent *krams* show dual organization, there being *krams* of the left and right, each having a slightly different function but both remaining closely related" (1934, p. 81).

Thus of the third level of the "army" hierarchy, Wales writes: "Owing to the duplication into *krams* of the left and right, there follow two generals, *Bijaiyasaṅgrama* and *Ramagaṁheṅ,* where there was only one. . . . In the same way, what was originally the fourth office of the *caturuṅga* was later held by two generals . . . of similarly reduced ranks" (pp. 141–142).

This matter of parallelism and replication reaches its climax in this example: "So far as the military organization was concerned, it was carried a step further when in later times the various *krams* of the civil administration began each to keep a few troops, which, since the distinction between *dahar* and *balar'oan* [military and civil] had been abolished and men were called up indiscriminately, might serve as a nucleus for an army in the event of war" (p. 152).

Finally, similar examples of replication were commonplace in the ad-

[7] In fact the proliferation of duplicated entities of decreasing scale at all levels is one with our previous description of the *cakkavatti* as a world ruler presiding over lesser kings and they over still smaller, and so on, in a scheme of satellites.

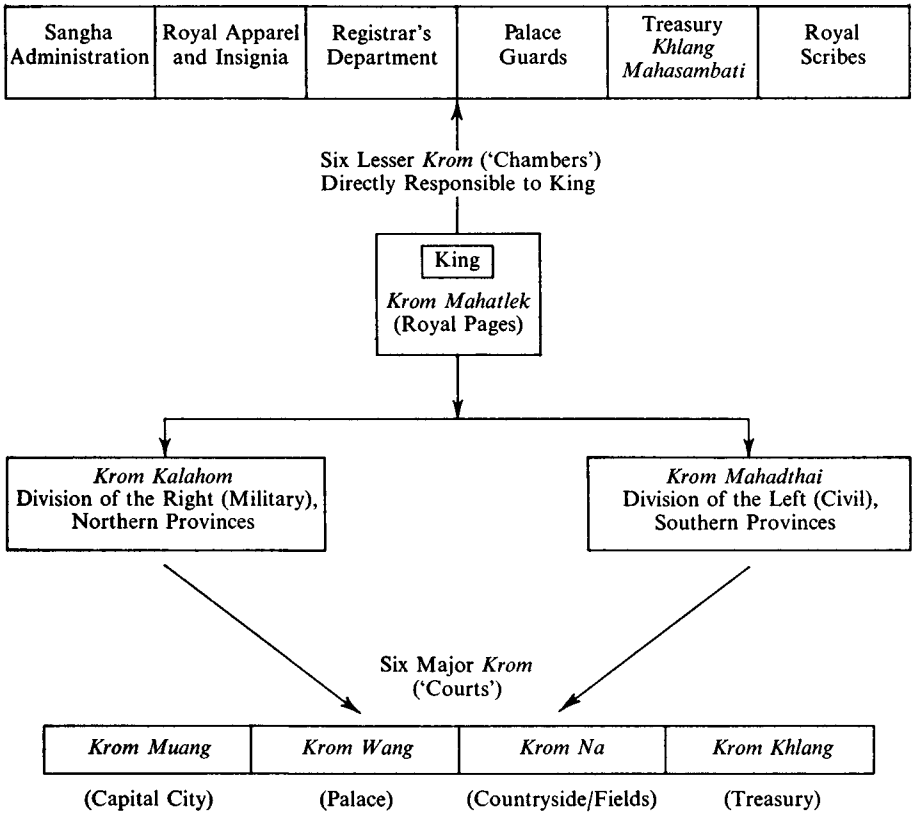


Figure 8.4. Dual arrangement of *Krom* with the king in the center. *Note:* This diagram attempts to show how the dual arrangement of *krom*, on both parallel and asymmetrical principles, falls in a radial cluster around the king as center. (Based on Wales 1934.)

ministration of justice. By the Bangkok period the ancient courts attached to the palace had fallen into disuse, and in their stead the department courts, or *sala kara krahdrvan*, flourished and multiplied exceedingly.

To attempt to follow the multiplication of departmental courts, which had brought chaos into Siamese administration of justice long before the whole system was swept away in 1893, would be a useless if not impossible task. It will be enough to note the tendency which characterized the evolution of the courts attached to the more important ministries. This was a tendency to change their function in accordance with the changes which overtook the *krams* to which they were attached. Thus, instead of one appeal court several appeal courts were established in conjunction with the various departments. When the administration of the provinces came under the control of the Mahatdaiya, Kalahom, and Glan, courts were established in connection with those ministries to hear appeals from the provinces. When control of the revenues came to be

divided amongst many departments, finance courts were established in connection with the various treasuries (p. 183).

"Courts and judges in the provinces were constituted on the same lines as those in the capital. Each official held his own court to decide cases appertaining to his department, while the *cau mo'aṅ* and *kramakara* collectively formed a tribunal to function in place of the Luk Khun, the latter being too far away for it to be easy to consult them. After they had considered the case they sent it to be tried by the court of the appropriate official" (p. 184).[8]

Cosmology and Geopolitics

Although Riggs' cosmological design of the traditional administrative system greatly supports and confirms our own galactic representation of the polity, in both its territorial and administrative layout, yet there is a serious divergence of views between us in the accounting of that design.

Riggs in fact is stating, as a descriptive and interpretive principle, that the pattern of governmental organization "was designed neither for territorial administration nor to carry out a set of functionally differentiated activities [but] rather it corresponded to the cosmologically oriented palace architecture . . ." (p. 79). Throughout his exposition – and he views himself as taking his cues from Heine-Geldern – he asserts that the traditional Siamese of the Ayutthayan period thought and behaved "cosmologically," that a prior conception of the cosmos as, for example, realized in palace architecture also determined the design of administration. But in so far as Riggs separates the cosmological perspective from the practical territorial and functional considerations of administrative practice, he unnecessarily introduces a fallacy and a contradiction.

It is one thing – and it is a correct assertion – to say that the traditional man of Ayutthaya did not disaggregate territorial and functional considerations or that he did not make an absolute civil-military distinction; it is quite another to suggest that he thought and behaved so religiously that matters that *we* would identify today as political and economic were incidental or irrelevant to him. No; if we want to be accurate in phrasing that older orientation to the world, we should say that the cosmological design was not so much religious or sacred in contrast to practical or secular concerns (for distinctions were not made in this idiom) as it was a

[8] Most apposite information is given by Vickery on the replication of administrative structures in the provinces on a smaller scale than in the capital province: "In theory, the first-class provinces were entitled to a full set of ministries and *damruot* officials duplicating those of the capital, second- and third-class provinces had the same number of ministries but fewer official positions, and all of these officials were appointed locally by the governor, except the *yokrabat*, sent from the capital. In reality, however, not all the provinces had the full set of ministries. . . . The fourth-class provinces lacked such local official ranks and in theory were directly controlled by the ministries in the capital with governors appointed for three-year terms" (1970, p. 866).

totalization that fused together in an ordered, unitary "nondualistic" view all those considerations that we moderns might disaggregate as religious, political, administrative, and economic conceptions. It is such hierarchized totalizations that we have unraveled in Hindu and Buddhist thought. In the Buddhist case the dharma of kingship should ideally encompass and order society morally, politically, and economically, that is, multifariously, and the political organization of society was not distinguished from its civil aspect, nor state marked off from society.

If we were not prepared to admit the cosmological scheme as such a totalization, then Riggs' account confronts us with a contradiction – after all, as a political scientist he is attempting to portray in his own words the system of *administration;* his hypothetical plan of the four courts is built on *functional* spatial distinctions among treasury, palace, city, and countryside; he is aware that the organization of officials did in fact empirically address itself to collecting taxes, mobilizing for warfare and for corvée and so on; that, in sum, the cosmologically designed polity existed to enact politics and the business of government in the larger sense.

If we grant this much, then we ought to push further in our investigation of the logic of this cosmological design.

The incomparable Weber did not fail in his discussion of patrimonialism to comment on some of the features of the administrative elaboration we are trying to understand. Weber (1968) noted the fact of subdivision of the ruler's powers that inevitably results in a fragmentation of power and an apportionment of offices that cannot be accounted for on rational bureaucratic grounds of specialization, efficiency, technical competence, and so on. The divisibility of the ruler's powers takes place because under patrimonial conditions there is a conflation and fusion of the concepts of office and person occupying it, so that the ruler's power is considered to be his *personal property*. And "since all powers, economic and political, are considered the ruler's personal property, hereditary division is a normal phenomenon" (p. 1052). But such subdivision on a hereditary basis on the one hand does not produce definitive division and on the other strives for equalization of revenues and seigneurial rights among the divisional rulers and claimants.

Weber also commented on an associated feature that has been translated into English as "typification." A synonym would be "stereotypy." It is ultimately related to the patrimonial office's lacking "above all the bureaucratic separation of the 'private' and the 'official' sphere, and to the political administration, too, [being] treated as a purely personal affair of the ruler" (p. 1028).

The ruler's "exercise of power is therefore entirely discretionary, at least insofar as it is not more or less limited by the ubiquitous intervention of sacred traditions. With the exception of traditionally stereotyped functions, hence in all political matters proper, the ruler's personal discretion delimits the jurisdiction of his officials. Jurisdiction is at first completely

fluid. . . . *Of course, each office has some substantive purpose and task, but its boundaries are frequently indeterminate.*" Weber remarked that "competing powers create stereotyped boundaries and something akin to 'established jurisdictions' "; but since a patrimonial official treats his office as a personal right (and not from the point of view of "impersonal" interests), this "quasi-jurisdictional limitation of the office *results primarily from the competing economic interests of the various patrimonial officials*" (p. 1029).[9]

Weber thus concluded that: "In a patrimonial state every prebendal decentralization of the administration, every jurisdictional delimitation caused by the distribution of sources of fee incomes among competitors, and even more so every appropriation of benefices signifies not rationalization but *typification*" (p. 1038). And as the appropriation of offices progresses "the ruler's power, especially his political power, disintegrates into a bundle of powers separately appropriated by various individuals by virtue of special privileges. . . . This structure is rigid, not adaptable to new tasks, not amenable to abstract regulation and thus a characteristic contrast to bureaucracy . . ." (p. 1040).

Now Weber's accounting for the stereotyped proliferation of administrative offices in patrimonial polities is certainly instructive (despite its overvaluation of the possibility of practically achieving a rational bureaucracy in some other modern polity) insofar as it perceptively points to political conceptions and processes as in part at least generating administrative subdivision and typification. While it only partially illuminates the details of the Thai case, it at least dissolves the exclusive reliance on some archaic cosmological mode of thought as the explanation of the administrative patterning in galactic or patrimonial polities.

Let me phrase our problem as follows: The formal aspects of the traditional Thai polity's administrative and territorial layout that we have already described in copious detail index a conspicuous feature that a resort to the cosmological mode of thought cannot fully illuminate. This we may call the process of *administrative involution*, characterized by modulated redundancy, that we saw take shape in two isomorphic processes: Within the *krom* (departments) specialization of units was often diminished by symmetrical duplication of subunits of lower scale, and among *krom*, division of labor was again diminished by a parallelism of tasks among units that thus became replicas of one another scaled down in magnitude.

In other words, granted the propensity to concentric classification and dualism, we can see that this propensity continually attacked the boundaries of functional differentiation to produce a more natural galactic or mandala pattern.

Thus although I should not wish to underrate the existence of a classificatory tendency as a conceptual system with attendant effects on social ordering, I also want to ask the question whether at another level there

[9] Italics are mine (S. J. T.).

were sociopolitical processes also corroborating the same design of the galactic polity. The feature we want to concentrate on particularly is that baroque elaboration of hierarchical administrative units and offices, which, however, atrophy or are thrown into confusion by an irresistible push toward decentralized autonomies.

Let us take the example of the proliferation and duplication of courts of justice that we alluded to earlier. Looking at the problem from a different perspective, Rabibhadana advances a sociological reason for that phenomenon, grounded in the manner in which officials traditionally derived their income from taxes and fees – that is, from "eating the land" (*kin muang*) as the old Thai expression goes. He also suggests that this practice in turn ramifies with patron-client relations:

> Most noble officials were judges of one type of case or another, for the administration of justice was divided among various *krom*. These were what H. G. Quaritch Wales called departmental courts. In the provinces each official held his own court to decide cases appertaining to his department (krom). To be a judge in a case was a lucrative business. *Luang* Chakkhapani tells us that when an official of the rank equivalent to *Chao Krom* (Krom Chief) realized that his income was insufficient, he could request a favor from his superior by asking the latter to let him conduct the trial at his own home. This was profitable for, while the trial lasted, both parties to the litigation and also the witnesses had to stay at the house of the judge. During the trials, then, relatives and friends of both parties would bring food and other things to the judge's house for them. In order to please the judge, they would also bring him gifts of money and food. Further, when the official was allowed to conduct a trial at his house, he had the prison at his house, and could put either party or both in prison, have either of them flogged, or put in chains. One can see that the situation was most tempting for the judge to take bribes and blackmail the litigants, and such cases were not lacking. . . . There was, however, a snag in this profitable business. For there was the right for either party to appeal against the conduct of the trial, stating for example, that the judge had taken a bribe from the other party. As *Luang* Chakkhapani tells us, officials who were judges of low rank, therefore, tried to protect themselves by *fak tua* with those officials sitting on the Court of Appeal. Thus an informal client and patron relationship was created between a lower ranked noble and a higher ranked one with the exception that the latter would give aid and protection (1969, p. 132).

There are indeed good grounds for our mooring the galactic polity at one of its ends to the domain of sociopolitical formations and processes, which too are guided by a conceptual and normative logic that converges with other propensities of a totalized cosmology. We must, in order to appreciate this level of facts, consider from the ground upward, so to say, the elementary sociopolitical units of the time and the mechanisms of manpower mobilization on which the polity in its more successful, expanding phase relied to implement its projects.

We must begin with a gloss on the concept of *krom*, which Riggs all too narrowly assimilated to the palace architectural divisions of courts

and chambers but which in fact had a wider range of meanings. The gloss given by Riggs does not negate that given by Wales, in that *krom* did also mean something translatable as a "department" or "unit" of central administration, reproduced in the provincial *muang* administrations; and that, in the context of an army raised for warfare, *krom* was used to describe various units translatable as "regimental division" (as opposed to lower units of *kong* (battalions) and *mu* (platoons).

But a critical meaning of *krom*, largely ignored by Riggs and insufficiently emphasized by Wales, is its connotation of a leader with his attached following of henchmen, retinue, and servants. A prince or *chao muang* (chief of a principality or province) had his own personal following and retainers (*phrai*) on a scale smaller than the king's; the king could assign to princes graduated *krom* privileges which related primarily to titles and retainers (*phrai som*) rather than administrative powers as such, and in turn he could confiscate the retainers of deceased princes and attach them to his service (as *phrai luang*) if circumstances dictated such action.[10]

The Law of the Civil Hierarchy enumerated seven grades of *krom* rank for the princes, the first two being accorded to the palaces of the front and rear (*van na* and *van lang*). These two *krom* ranks differed greatly from those assigned to lesser princes, because they were invested with some of the attributes of kingship, and their palaces and retinues duplicated the body politic of the king on a smaller scale. Thus as heads of their own palaces, they had their own officials and retinue of all ranks in imitation of the king's administration. The *uparat* of the front palace had a *sakdina* of 100,000 (the highest in the kingdom, the king's being beyond computation), underwent a coronation at which the king officiated, and organized his own court, army, and so on.

As we shall see in a moment, the principle of a following "surrounding" a leader not only applied to princes but applied right down the line to include all officials in the king's or governor's administration. It is with these manpower implications of *krom* in mind that we may profitably view the political dynamics of the Ayutthayan kingdom.

The kingdom of Ayutthaya mobilized manpower in a manner compatible with its social organization. Rabibhadana views Thai society of that time as being composed of small groups, each with a leader. As early as 1356 a requirement had been imposed compelling everyone to be registered under a leader, who was called a *nai* (or *munnai*).[11] This registration

[10] Holders of all *krom* ranks below the first and second grades had titular positions in the administration, the actual work being done by officials. The prince himself received a share in the personal services of the men of his *krom* and of the revenue collected by his officials, whereas princes not invested with *krom* rank only received comparatively small allowances.

[11] "When anyone institutes a legal proceeding, and he is not registered under any *munnai*, do not examine his case or give judgment. Send that man to *Satsadi* (The Registrar) to be made the king's man (*phrai luang*)." Quoted in Rabibhadana (1969), p. 20.

facilitated the recruitment of men for war, the leader being responsible for mobilizing the members of his group. Nonregistration could have dire consequences as a later edict of 1527 made clear: The culprit could be arrested and punished; he had no recourse to justice if injury was done him; and his property had no legal protection. These sanctions led to his being registered as a *phrai luang* and being subject to corvée.

When a *nai* (usually translated as "noble") who already had a certain number of *phrai* registered under him was assigned an official administrative position in a *krom*, his *phrai* too were assigned to that *krom* and be came members of it. Thus although in a formal sense the *krom* and its subunits and its system of ranked office presented a façade of hierarchy, at a constitutive level the *krom* was more nearly akin to an emulsion, in which cells of center-oriented *nai-phrai* patron-client groups adhered to other similar particles, under the overseership of a superior *nai* official (who brought to the combination his own *phrai* as well), and so on outward and upward to make larger emulsions. It is this emulsion structure constituted of circles of leaders and their followers that helps explain in part the processes of administrative involution (bipartition, replication, and parallelism) that we found to be at work at both intra-*krom* and inter-*krom* levels. For the globular structure of the emulsion has also within it the propensity to generate, opposite to that of adhesion, the process of disaggregation into replica units of smaller scale that are tenaciously appreciative of their self-subsistence and relative autonomy. (See Figure 8.5). This disaggregation was connived by the king and his ministers, who, in order to balance the power of rival princes and nobles who were a threat to their security, practiced the art of divide and rule with a vengeance.[12] The highest division of the country into (to use Wales' translation) civil and military divisions or subsequently into the northern and southern provinces, as well as all other dual divisions of decreasing scale down to the smallest *krom* or administrative division, were thus up to a point informed by these political tendencies and considerations that we have just discussed.

King Chulalongkorn gave this invaluable interpretation of the dualism at work in earlier times:

> The administration of our country, as had been done, was to have six ministers. Two of them were made Chief Ministers. The *Samuha Kalahom* had authority over all military *krom*. The *Samuha Nayok* had authority over all civil *krom*. In consideration of the positions as originally established, it seems as if one of these had the responsibility and authority over all military affairs, while the other had the responsibility and authority over all civil affairs. But from events as recorded in the annals, it does not appear to have been so. They were like the Registrars of the population of the military and the civil groups. Moreover, as to the division into the military and civil groups, although the laws showed

[12] Rabibhadana 1969, p. 25.

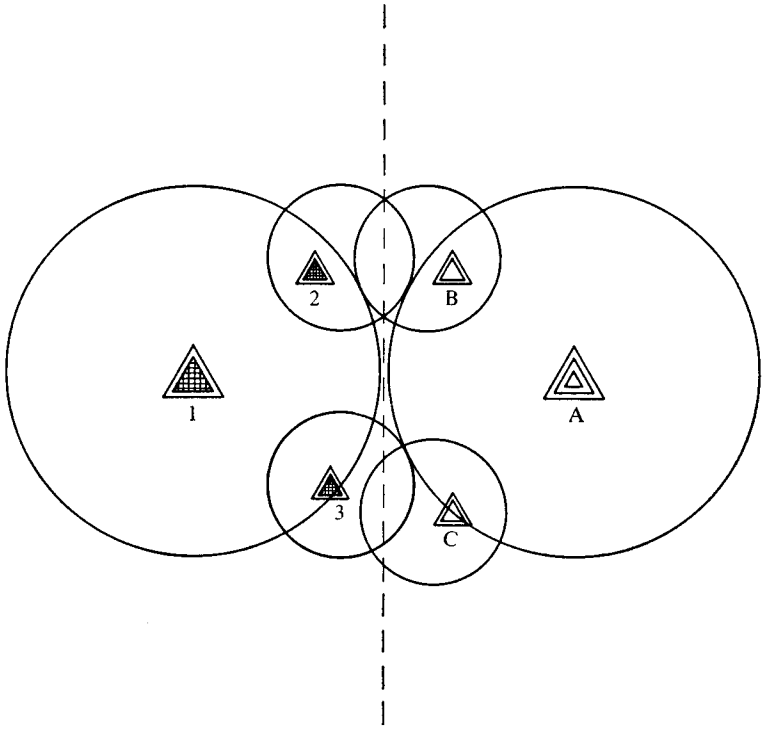


Figure 8.5. The interlocking *Nai-Phrai* circles of varying size. *Note:* After partitioning their spheres of influence, the superior leaders, 1 and A, have equivalent spheres; so do the lesser leaders, 2 and B, 3 and C, who owe allegiance to their respective leaders, 1 and A.

the differences between the *phrai luang* of one group and the other in some places, in wars both groups were used equally in the same manner so that the original purposes of such divisions are impossible to be known . . . (Rabibhadana 1969, p. 25).

And Rabibhadana, with particularly the Palatine Law (*Kot Monthianban*) in mind, comments:

The necessity of having at least two Chief Ministers was undoubtedly to create a balance of power. In order to prevent the high ranking officials from joining forces against the throne, at least during some periods, there were laws in effect forbidding high ranking officials to have private contact with each other. Capital punishment was prescribed for officials of the *sakdina* 1,600 to 10,000 who went to see each other at their abodes or talked to each other in secret. An official of the *sakdina* 600–10,000 who knew of any illegal action committed by another, and refrained from informing the king would be punished as a traitor. Further, to ensure their loyalty, they were required yearly to drink the imprecated water, taking the oath of allegiance to the king (p. 25).

It is our thesis then that the emulsion-type globular structure that underpins the formal dual classification and parallelism in the central administrative machinery is similar to the galactical structure we unraveled when we analyzed the territorial layout and the center-periphery relations of the polity as a whole. If this thesis is correct, then the alleged change in the mobilization structure from a territorial to a personal basis, which Wales dramatizes as having taken place in mid-fifteenth century, is only of superficial importance. Even if the heads and high officials of the central *krom* were now required to reside at the capital, all that would have been required for effective mobilization is that the lower-rung petty officials (*khun mun*) lived in territorial proximity to the *phrai* of the *krom*, thus enabling, in theory, messages from the capital to pass along the nodes of lower positions finally to reach the *khun mun*, instructing them to mobilize their men; then upward again the aggregation could take place as each *nai* and his men reported to still higher *nai*, the process culminating at the capital itself.

Rabibhadana has with masterly skill highlighted how, on the one hand, the power of the princes who had control over their *phrai som* (who were organized in a *krom* system replicating the royal model), and, on the other, the power of the nobles who in the capacity of officials had control over the king's *phrai* assigned to the administrative *krom*, had serious implications for factional struggles and for the political integration of the country. The increase in the number of the king's men correspondingly increased the power of his officials:

> The planned movement and resettlement of people in preparation for the war of independence, as well as the resettlement of captives gathered from [the] successful wars of King Naresuan, and his brother King Ekathotsarot (1569–1620), must have also been factors making for the increase of *phrai luang*. This was reflected in the increased power of the nobles. Only 10 years after the death of King Ekathotsarot, we find that in the period between 1628 and 1630, the *Samuha Kalahom* played a major role in succession disputes. In 1628 he succeeded in organizing a revolt against King Chettha, and placed a puppet, King Athitwong, on the throne. The minister himself wielded all power. In 1629 he took over the position of the king and was called King Prasatthong (p. 36).

But the princes also made their bid to seduce royal retainers to their service:

> The loss of *phrai luang* which also means the increase of *phrai som*, became serious not long before the reign of King Borommakot (1732–1758). The events from 1732 to the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 as well as the tone of laws and decrees of this period demonstrated the seriousness of this loss. There was severe fighting between the princes before Borommakot came to the throne. During his reign when the king journeyed to worship the Buddha's footprint at Saraburi, three hundred Chinese dared to make an attempt to plunder the Royal Palace. When the king gave a funeral ceremony for a princess, the procession was sixty men short and the minister did not know where to find men

to fill up the gap. He had to ask the king for advice and the king had to make up the procession by taking sixty men out from those on duty guarding the Royal Palace. A number of King Borommakot's laws and decrees reflect the loss of *phrai luang* (p. 37).

The most important consequence of the increased power of the princes was the increase in the number and seriousness of factional disputes which led to fighting and civil wars, particularly at times of succession. King Borommakot came to the throne only after a severe battle with other princes. In 1758 King Uthumphon succeeded his father to the throne only after having three important princes executed. Yet he, himself, had to give up the throne within that same year to his brother in order to avoid a civil war within the city. Such increase of factionalism within the city might have contributed to the weakness of Ayutthaya in resisting the Burmese attack in 1767 (p. 39).

Our discussion of the sociopolitical processes and patron-client formations as being endemic to Thai society necessarily modifies the historical scheme of change from tradition to modernity proposed by Riggs. Riggs' critique of the accounts of change given by Wales, Vella, Mosel, Siffin, Wilson was that they assumed that "centralized and functionally specialized administrative organization" or "functionally differentiated administration" had already been initiated by King Trailok in the fifteenth century, and that the process of modernization simply consisted in intensifying and elaborating that process of bureaucratization. This criticism that the use of external yardsticks of bureaucratization and rationalization do not give a meaningful internal emic account of the traditional Thai polity is well taken.

But the trouble lies in Riggs' substitute account. He pictures the change as more or less a discontinuous step from the cosmologically based traditional polity to a modernized bureaucratic polity via the "transformation of monarchy" and "the functionalization of bureaucracy" initiated particularly by King Chulalongkorn. Siamese survival, in the face of being hemmed in between the crocodile and the whale of Anglo-French imperial ambitions, was achieved, among other things, by forging "a relatively effective political and administrative system" and by achieving an expanded rice production and higher economic performance.

That the monarchy was transformed is true, though we do not quite agree with the wording of the thesis that the monarchic institution survived "due to the fact that, drawing on Buddhistic rather than Brahmanic sources, a new image of the throne was also created, capable of withstanding the erosive forces of modernism and secularism" (p. 109). We shall make our correction later (see Appendix to Chapter 11).

That from King Chulalongkorn's time onward a remarkable building of the institutions of central government and of functionally differentiated bureaucracies (ministries, departments, local government structures) was achieved is again true and well documented by several scholars. But what emerges as problematic, because it stems from the initial premise of Siamese society transforming itself from a cosmological ideology and

perspective to an ideology of modernization, is Riggs' characterizing the conspicuous features of modern Thai politics *as being solely a product of the bureaucratic polity that resulted from modernization.*

The pattern of modern Thai politics described as "non-ideological politics," which takes the form of political competition and rivalry between various cliques and factions for which the chief political arena is the cabinet, whose cliques have constituencies in the armed forces and in the upper echelons of bureaucracy, is a characterization that is in line with Wilson's earlier work (1962). Riggs advances further to represent the Thai bureaucratic polity as manifesting "prismatic" qualities (as opposed to "diffraction") in that while the latter represents a state in which functional bureaucratic differentiation is combined with increasing performance, the former combines increased differentiation with "negative development." This is so because the prismatic polity lacks the requisite "institutional nexus" in the wider society for the regulation, coordination, and guidance of its bureaucratic structures.

Once again Riggs' characterization of modern Thai politics[13] in such terms is quite accurate and illuminating. But it is seriously doubtful whether this pattern is merely a consequence of the rise of the bureaucratic polity in the era of modernization, particularly in its post-1932 phase. Our account of the traditional Thai polity as a galactic system, on the one hand, demonstrated its cosmological (or preferably mandala) armature as a totalization and, on the other, linked that conceptual system (formalized in terms of cardinal points and concentric circles and satellites surrounding a center, of unity and differentiation systematically built through dualities, bipartitions, and replications) with an on-the-ground sociopolitical dynamics consistent with factional politics and rivalry between leader-follower cliques. The administrative involution and factional struggles of the past are in certain respects not all that different from the prismatic qualities of the bureaucratic polity of today, except that today the center of the polity, Bangkok, is the massively centripetal focus and the decisive stage for the enactment of politics.

In other words, our being perceptive to the transformations and changes in the recent history of Thailand need not blind us to the existence of certain continuities of conceptual and normative orientations and of sociopolitical structures and processes that are at work today as in the past, even though the arena has changed, the pool of power and economic resources has enlarged, the players are different, and the galactic polity itself has been replaced by a more centralized radial polity.

We may close this account of the tradtional Thai polity, prone to pulsations and oscillations, passing from imperial conquest to humiliating reduced circumstances, with a comment that we shall reactivate in the latter part of the book. Our theme in Chapter 9 will be how in the Bangkok era this traditional galactic polity made a transition in incremental and linear

[13] Until 1971, which is the terminal point of the book.

fashion to a relatively stable and resourceful polity. But that transformation must finally be cut to size by our taking into account the persistence of ingrained political formations and processes, which we have variously described as galactic replication, globular emulsion, and so on, and which would modify and involute the present-day political and administrative structure of the country, producing within and between ministries and departments duplication of activities, factional patron-client formations, and bureaucratic capitalism (i.e., the use by officials of the political and administrative system to generate private income).

9. Asokan and Sinhalese Traditions Concerning the Purification of the Sangha

It is a commonplace of scholarship that the Buddha himself is credited with the recommendation that the community of *bhikkhus* organize and conduct their affairs in a fashion that is the very antithesis of the procedures of a centralized polity. In the *Maha Parinibbana Suttanta* the Buddha recommends that the *bhikkhus* conduct their affairs in the Vajjian style[1] (which certain scholars label as the "republican" model as opposed to the "monarchical"): "So long, O mendicants, as the brethren foregather oft, and frequent the formal meetings of their Order – so long as they meet in concord, and rise in concord, and carry out in concord the duties of the Order. . . . so long may the brethren be expected not to decline, but to prosper."

Further along in this famous discourse occurs the much quoted admonition to Ananda that the continuance of the brotherhood does not depend upon a leader: "Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. . . . Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves. . . ."

We have already (Chapter 5) cautioned against a simplistic assimilation of the Vajjian political style to a republican model, although the Buddha's alleged advice on how the sangha should conduct its affairs is a meaningful contrast with the conventions of kingly rule.

What were the sangha's organizing principles in early Buddhism, as can be gleaned, for example from the *Vinaya Pitaka?* The Buddha's disciples, like other "sects" of the time, were organized under a teacher; yet as Ananda, when questioned by the Magadhan minister Vassakara, affirmed, the master had nominated no successor and exhorted his disciples "to take refuge in the Norm." Yet the sangha in early Buddhism showed certain discernible organizational patterns: the set of regulations, the *Patimokkha,* was recited bimonthly at the *uposatha* gatherings, and the annual *pavarana* confessional also confirmed the sangha's constitution as "assemblies" of monks. Again, rules that emphasized the corporate life during the *avasa* rainy season were generated, as were procedures for adjudicating disputes "by the collectivity of monks within a *sima.*" But internal differentiation

[1] The tribal or *gana* polity of Vaisali dominated by the Licchavis was actually known as Vajji-*gana* (Misra 1972, p. 206).

within the fraternities was not entirely absent, as, for example, witnessed by the fact that the initiation procedure in its fully developed form required the presence of at least 10 monks and the selection of an ordainer, the *upadhyaya*, and an *acarya*. Moreover, the authority of elders may have been a matter of dispute in the Second Council.[2] Nevertheless, let us accept that in sum a "communal" rather than a differentiated hierarchical emphasis emerges as the hallmark of the internal ordering of the early sangha.

This stressed communal organization of monks who should rely on themselves alone through their adherence to the truth, which is posed against the monarchical organization of lay society (such as that represented by Magadha), finds a parallel expression in the twin concepts of *anacakra* (or *rajanacakka*) referring to the royal power and domain, and *buddhacakra* (or *buddhanacakka*) standing for the Buddha's power and domain, which are indexed by the spiritual power of the sangha (Tambiah 1970, p. 74). This distinction has in a formal sense further ramifications and nuances stemming from the opposition between householder and the homeless *bhikkhu*. The king is the most meritorious of laymen and gift givers, but his domain as that of his subjects is implicated in the concerns of this world. The monk's vocation is different, and its virtue derives from the practice of an inner discipline and the search for a higher truth that encompasses and transcends the householder's.

We have now before us a central problem. The very predilection of the pristine monks for living in separate collectivities led very early in their history to dissensions and schisms and fragmentation. With no prescriptive rule or internal basis for authority and organization to hold the movement together as some kind of "church," the sangha's existence and integrity could only be guaranteed by some external authority, that is, by the polity in which it was embedded, and of which kingship was the articulating and ordinating principle.

Hence we take up in this chapter the implications of the ideologically central alliance in Theravada polities between the sangha and the political authority, and the symbiosis as well as the dialectical tensions contained in that yoking. We must begin with Asoka to whom many precedents are traced.

The very same account, which I shall use shortly, of King Asoka's active intervention in the life of the *bhikkhus* in Chapter 4 of *Mahavamsa* is preceded by two exemplary statements about the relationship between king and *bhikkhu* in which the king is put in his place, so to speak, and made to concede formal precedence to the *bhikkhu's* status.

[2] Significantly, it was the Vajjian monks who dissented from the Sthaviras, and Misra (1972, p. 18) quotes Mrs. Rhys Davids as opining that the real point of issue was not that relating to the acceptance of "silver and gold" but the rights of the individual, as well as those of provincial communities as against the prescriptions of a centralized hierarchy; he also cites N. Dutt as arguing that the Vajjians reared in a "democratic"

The first instructive story is the encounter between King Asoka and Nigrodha, the saintly *samanera*,[3] who wins him over to the doctrine. The story goes that King Asoka, experiencing kindly feelings toward Nigrodha, summoned him to his presence.

And the king said to him: "Sit, my dear, upon a fitting seat." Since he saw no other bhikkhu there he approached the royal thorne. Then, as he stepped toward the throne, the king thought: "To-day, this samanera will be lord in my house!" Leaning on the king's hand he (the monk) mounted the throne and took his seat on the royal throne under the white canopy. And seeing him seated there king Asoka rejoiced greatly that he had honoured him according to his rank. When he had refreshed him with hard and soft foods prepared for himself he questioned the samanera concerning the doctrine taught by the Sambuddha. Then the samanera preached to him the "Appamadavagga."

The pointed lesson is that the king, at least on that special day, made a *samanera* lord in his palace, a precedence we know that some kings in Southeast Asia have claimed as an act of piety to have repeated on *uposatha* days when a monk delivered the sermon seated on the throne. An extension of this show of piety is the ceremonial presentation of kingship and kingdom to the sangha.[4]

In the second didactic story, King Asoka, for all his kingly acts of generosity to the dhamma and the *bhikkhus*, is reminded that a king is in the final valuation still a layman and not a "kinsman of the religion." The king, proud of his pious deeds "asked the brethren while taking his seat: "Whose generosity toward the doctrine of the Blessed One was ever (so) great (as mine), venerable sirs?"

The *thera* Moggaliputta answered the king's question: "Even in the lifetime of the Blessed One there was no generous giver like to thee."

When the king heard this, he rejoiced yet more and asked: "Nay then, is there a kinsman of Buddha's religion like unto me?"

To this question, he on whom lay the charge of the doctrine replied thus to the king: "Even a lavish giver of gifts like to thee is not a kinsman of the religion; giver of wealth is he called, O ruler of men. But he who lets son or daughter enter the religious order is a kinsman of the religion and withal a giver of gifts." The king accordingly consented to the ordination of his son and daughter, Mahinda and Samghamitta.

atmosphere must have resented the powers and privileges that the *arhats* or orthodox claimed and reserved for themselves.

[3] The story has certain nuances in that Nigrodha is the son of King Asoka's eldest brother Sumana whom Asoka slaughtered in order to mount the throne. This Nigrodha is thus in one sense a rightful candidate for the throne that King Asoka occupies.

[4] We have in the preceding chapter already given examples of how the Sukhodaya kings acknowledged on formal occasions the sangha's precedence. King Lo Tai honored the Mahasami with royal treatment, and the king followed up by becoming a novice himself. Another king enacted the aforementioned Nigrodha-Asoka tradition by allowing the monk delivering a sermon on *uposatha* day to sit on the royal throne. We also took note of Rahula's account of the early Sinhalese conceptions of the relation between the king and the sangha.

It is the king's duty to protect the religion and the order of monks, and as their chief lay supporter he must make gifts and endowments and ensure a prosperous society within which the *sasana* and sangha could bloom. It is this conception of kingship that is celebrated in the Sinhalese *Mahavamsa*. In theory the king vis-à-vis the sangha should not interefere directly in the field relating to the interpretation and adjudication of issues relating to the *vinaya;* nor was he considered competent to pronounce on matters of doctrines. His task rather was to guarantee the corporate existence of the sangha within the society.

However, the relation between the royal domain and the sangha's domain could move from the complementary and symbiotic to dialectical tensions, which manifest a notable pattern: Although in theory and in certain historical circumstances the monks have participated in politics, the major thrust is in the other direction. The basis for this thrust derives from the synthesis that we have advocated at length in the early chapters of his book: At the very apex of the Buddhist society and polity there was under the aspect of kingship a fusion of morality (dhamma) and power (*artha*), of religion and politics, to a degree unknown in traditional Hindu India. This fusion was the most important organizing principle of the Theravada Buddhist polities of Southeast Asia. Thus although on the one hand there is the ideal that kingship should be dedicated to and subordinated to religion (*sasana*), kings in their role as protectors and defenders of religion have frequently taken direct action as political masters to "purify" the religion.

Now the king's duty to protect the religion from external invasion and internal civilian disorder is not difficult to grasp. It is, however, more problematic to understand the destruction and spoliation of each other's Buddhist temples, *viharas*, and images and treasures by Siamese and Burmese kings and their armies: The answer probably lies in the nature of Buddhism in its particularized and special relation to polities that consider themselves by "race," culture, and language the true inheritors and defenders of the religion. The following excerpt from an edict promulgated in 1810 by King Rama II in the first year of his reign is blunt:

> It has been the custom of kings from old time to preserve the Buddhist religion and to further its prosperity. The way of doing this was by keeping cohorts of good soldiers to form an army, and by the accumulation of weapons, with the royal power at the head. Thereby he vanquished all his enemies in warfare, and he prevented the Buddhist religion from being endangered by the enemy, as kings have always done.

But the king's right to purify the religion was usually exercised in circumstances of monastic abuse and degeneracy generated from *within* the ranks of the sangha. Frequently, the monks were found not to live according to the *vinaya* rules of monastic life, and the guaranteeing of their disciplinary purity was accepted as part of the king's competence. Thus we

have here a matter of central interest: The king as political authority and *dharmaraja* acts to correct the monk's failings in his practice of the *vinaya*, on which foundation is built the monk's salvation quest with which the king is less competent to deal.

A superficial acquaintance with Thailand's recent history, especially from King Mongkut's time, would show the nature of the royal initiative in the organization and regulation of the sangha, which has been increasingly organized as an ecclesiastical hierarchy paralleling the civil hierarchy and having systematic relations with government. The king is formally the "head" of the sangha in the sense of wielding the authority to appoint the supreme patriarch (*Phra Sangkharat*). There is no doubt that in the heyday of his rule King Chulalongkorn administered the sangha as part of the state, and was personally involved in the appointments of monks to and dismissals from ecclesiastical office.

Thailand is not unique in this. Burmese evidence amply supports occurrences of the same nature.

> It is a convention in Burmese history that the ruler should show his fitness to rule by, *inter alia*, being the protector and purifier of the religion. This theme runs from Anawratha's "destruction" of the Tantric "*Ari*" monks and his establishment of "pure" Theravada in the eleventh-century city of Pagan to the holding of the Sixth Buddhist Council by the post-independence Government in Rangoon. That this protection and purification always to some degree implies control was shown, in history, by royal selection of household tutors for the "archbishoprics" and, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, by the formation of a Ministry of Religious Affairs whose main aim was the purification of the monkhood through the establishment of efficient ecclesiastical courts and a Sangha parliament . . . (Mendelson 1960, p. 112).

As a matter of fact, the traditions and precedents for the royal acts of purification of the sangha can be traced in Sinhalese history back to the early Anuradhapura period and, finally, still further back to the accounts of the Asokan era itself, which indeed can be seen as providing the charter and model. The chronicles and inscriptional evidence pose fine problems regarding the circumstances under which and the manner in which the political authority of the sangha interacted, the way in which the two domains marked or failed to mark their special competences.

I propose to approach the Thai data by first dealing with Asokan and Sinhalese traditions relating to the purification of the sangha. I particularly want to focus on the Sinhalese traditions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which is the period when early Thai Buddhism is reputed to have been fertilized and influenced by Sinhalese Pali Buddhism.

An excellent point of entry is provided by Ratnapala (1971) who deals with some of the *katikavatas* (charters or laws of the Buddhist order) drawn up between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries in Ceylon as a result of purifications (*sasanavisodhanas*) initiated by kings.

There were two kinds of *katikavatas* known in Ceylon – one that Rat-

napala identifies as *vihara katikavata*, whose scope did not extend beyond the boundaries of that *vihara* for which it was promulgated, and the other, which he identifies as the *sasana katikavata*, which "contain injunctions that cover almost every aspect of bhikkhu life" and whose jurisdiction "was not limited to the individual Viharas but extended throughout the island irrespective of the localities where the bhikkhus lived" (p. 8).

It is with five examples of the latter (which are also associated with "purifications") that Ratnapala deals: Of these five we are particularly concerned with two, namely, Maha Parakrama Katikavata (MPK), promulgated during the reign of Parakrama Bahu I (1153–1186), and Dambadeni Katikavata (DK), enacted in the reign of Parakrama Bahu II (1236–1207).[5]

The Mode of Enacting the Katikavata

The mode of enacting the *katikavata* – let us take the Maha-Parakramabahu Katikavata (MPK) for the study of this problem – throws light on the complementary roles of the king and the sangha authorities and thereby helps us to answer the question as to their respective involvement in the actual regulation of the life of monks.

Let us first concentrate on the words of the *katikavata* and make our own inferences before turning to the interpretations of the text by other scholars. The *katikavata* attributes to the king the *initiative* in seeing the necessity for the purification of the sangha and of setting matters in motion:

> His Majesty . . . was enjoying the delights of kingship . . . and . . . he witnessed the sons of house-holders in the Sasana, who having succumbed themselves to the poisonous influences (arising from) the non-observance and ill-observance (of precepts) through ignorance and imperfect knowledge were destined to the sufferings of the *apaya*. (Then his Majesty reflected thus). "If a universal monarch[6] like me were to remain indifferent seeing such a blot on the immaculate Buddha-sasana it would perish. . . . Let me serve the Buddha-sasana, which lasts five thousand years" (Ratnapala 1971, pp. 127–128).

The king is then reported as reflecting "Whom should I employ in order to restore the Sasana . . . ?" and noticing that the congregation of *bhikkhus* of the Mahavihara fraternity were "adorned with ornaments of gems of worldly virtues" . . . and were "devoid of blemishes, imperfections," enlisted their services in expelling "the many hundreds of sinful *bhikkhus*

[5] The other three dealt with by Ratnapala are: Kirti-Sri Rajasimha Katikavata I and II (KRK I, KRK II), enacted during Kirti-Sri's reign (1747–1782), and Rajadhi-Rajasimha Katikavata (RRK), enacted in the regnal period 1782–1798.

There are, besides these, two other *sasana katikavata* that are partially preserved in inscriptional form and two others that are not preserved at all. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the writing of new *sasana katikavatas* with the formation of new *nikayas* (chapters) in the colonial period.

[6] The phrasing is *ajna-cakravartiyak*.

from the Sasana of the Master, like the great king Dharmasoka who crushed the sinful *bhikkhus*, suppressed the heretics, cleansed the sangha of impurities and caused the third rehearsal of the Dhamma with the help of Moggaliputta-Tissa Maha-sthavira . . .(then) he brought about the unification of the three Nikayas."

Thus having accomplished the reconciliation and unification of the three factional sects[7] – namely, the Mahavihara (the Theravadins), the Abhayagirivihara (the Dhammarucikas) and the Jetavanavihara (the Sagalikas) – the king, in conscious and studied imitation of Emperor Asoka, is described as having recourse to the observance of *uposatha* precepts[8] and then "having entered the Vihara, and having appeared amidst the assembled Sangha" requested that in order that "the unification of the Sangha effected by me, may last five thousand years free from stain, may (the Reverend Sirs!) protect the Sasana by advice and admonition."

It is clear from the text that the king is characterized as "inviting" the sangha to take measures for its own good. "Having listened . . . to the invitations made (by the king) with manifestations of appropriate decorum, by the noble Theras headed by Maha-Kasyapa Maha-sthavira the following *katikavata* was formulated also without deviating from the tradition of the lineage of preceptors and after the consultation of Dhamma and Vinaya in order that those of negligent conduct might not find an opening for transgression" (Ratnapala, p. 129).

Acting on the king's "invitation," the sangha under the direction of the elder Maha-Kasyapa is represented as drawing up the actual regulations and admonitions for the conduct of the religious. By implication the king subsequently promulgated it as law. We may summarize this traditional account of the passing of a sangha act (i.e., the *katikavata*) as saying that it was effected by means of a supportive relation between king and sangha, with the king inviting, after effecting the expulsion of degenerate monks, the sangha to write its charter and the sangha in turn doing so under the direction of an elder of Maha-sthavira status "without deviating from the tradition of the lineage of preceptors and after the consultation of Dhamma and Vinaya. . . ." This implies that the sangha saw certain canonical texts as the authority for the rules drawn up in the form of the *katikavata*.

The Sinhala *katikavatas* are explicit then that the king took the initiative in purifying the sangha, particularly the expulsion of degenerate monks, and subsequently in encouraging the writing of a new disciplinary charter; but both tasks are accomplished by the sangha and its head acting voluntarily and autonomously. There is thus a strong element of ambiguity in this collaboration, an ambiguity that is embedded in Ratnapala's own commentary on the *katikavatas*.

The first *katikavata*, the MPK, writes Ratnapala,

[7] The *bhikkhus* of the other two fraternities were made to accept valid *upasampada* ordination from the Mahavihara, who were adjudged as having the valid tradition.

[8] As a layman he took the 8 or 10 precepts customarily taken on *uposatha*.

was *promulgated* by King Parakramabahu I (1153–1186 A.D.). The great elder Dimbulāgala Maha-Kasyapa was *instrumental* in the enactment of this Katikavata, which may be ascribed to the year 1165 A.D. The second of our Katikavatas, the DK [Dambadeniya Katikavata] belongs to the reign of King Parakramabahu II (1236–1270 A.D.). He *promulgated* it with the *assistance* of the Mahasamgha comprising the Arannavasins (the forest dwelling community) and the Gamavasins (the village dwelling community) headed by Mahasvami (the chief of the sangha (Medhamkara). The third Sasana Katikavata had its birth during the reign of Kirti-Sri Rajasimha (1747–1782 A.D.), who was *assisted* in its promulgation by the Mahasamgha of the foremost Viharas of the island of the time i.e. the Malvatta and the Asgiriya Viharas . . . (1971, pp. 8–9).

The words I have italicized contain the ambiguities.

Leaving aside for the moment the manner of realizing the *katikavatas*, how are we to understand the procedures of the preceding forceful disciplinary acts committed with royal participation, that is, the *sasanavisodhanas* (purifications of the religion), which are documented as customary in Buddhist polities from early times? The treatment of this issue must necessarily start with traditions relating to the Asokan era when the first royally initiated act of purification is alleged to have taken place.

Asoka's famous inscriptional edict threatening expulsion of schismatic monks and nuns and advocating a united order ran thus:

Samchi-Sarnath-Kaushambi Edict

To the high officials (of Pataliputra and Kaushambi) This is the command of King Devanampiya Piyadasi: "I have uuited the order. No one, monk or nun, shall split the order. Whosoever, monk or nun, causes a schism in the order shall be made to wear the white garments and expelled from the community." This command should be proclaimed to the order of the monks and nuns. King Devanampiya Piyadasi says this: Such an order must be posted on the highways within your jurisdiction. A copy of this should be made available to the lay-devotees. On the fasting days the lay-devotees should familiarize themselves with this order. Within your jurisdiction you should expel the schismatic. Similarly you must ensure the expulsion of the schismatic in all forts and districts in accordance with this command.

It is my desire that during the times of my sons and great grandsons, even so long as the sun and the moon endure, the Order may live completely united (Gokhale 1966).

It is noteworthy that Asoka directs his lay officials to implement the edict and appeals to lay devotees to act as watchdogs of the sangha's unity.

The edict's blunt and forceful statement of royal power is however modified and muted and amplified in the chronicles. In the *Mahavamsa's* account of the king's role in the sangha's purification the main subject matter is the Third Council held during the eighth year of the reign of King Asoka. The account is preceded by the recounting of many events in the early years of Asoka's reign: the fragmentation of the *bhikkhus* into sects following upon the schismatic Second Council; the king's encounter

with the "peaceful ascetic, the samanera Nigrodha," who when told to sit upon a fitting seat, mounted Asoka's royal throne; the birth of Moggaliputta Tissa from the Brahma world, his line of teachers and he becoming a great *thera;* the ordination of the king's son and daughter; the exemplary ascetic life and death by fire meditation of the ascetic Tissa; and the equally exemplary meritorious deeds of the king who built 84,000 *viharas* in 84,000 cities and showed great concern for monks and subjects. It is against this backdrop that the events leading to the Third Council are introduced with unexpected abruptness:

From that time onwards the revenues of the brotherhood were exceeding great, and since those who were converted later caused the revenues to increase, heretics who had (thereby) lost revenue and honour took likewise the yellow robe, for the sake of revenue, and dwelt together with the bhikkhus. They proclaimed their own doctrines as the doctrine of the Buddha and carried out their own practices even as they wished.

And the venality of the *bhikkhus* calls for a purification of the sangha. The *Mahavamsa* account of this purification is explicit about the wrong and the right procedures for the political authority to adopt vis-à-vis the sangha in achieving the objective.

At first the king sent a minister, commanding him, "Go, settle this matter and let the uposatha festival be carried out by the community of *bhikkhus* in my arama." This "fool" went thither, and upon the *bhikkhus'* refusal to hold the festival with those whom they considered heretics, the minister struck off the head of several *theras.* The king himself was held guilty by some monks of this crime of violence, but he was exonerated and later saw his way to the conduct of purification in the appropriate manner.

This correct manner consisted in the king's *requesting* the great *thera* Moggaliputta, who had sought solitary retreat in the face of the corruption of the *bhikkhus,* to help him restore the religion by saying "be our helper, venerable sir, to befriend religion." The king sent a ship to bring the *thera* on the Ganges river, and "going down even knee-deep into the water the king respectfully gave his right hand to the thera, as he came down from the ship," and thereafter entertained him in a pleasure garden. The elder absolved the king of the guilt of the murder of the *bhikkhus* by his minister, and on the seventh day he had the *bhikkhus* assembled in full numbers.

We must now pay careful attention to the *Mahavamsa's* continuation of the story:

Then seated with the thera on one side behind a curtain the ruler called to him in turn the bhikkhus of the several confessions and asked them: "Sir, what did the Blessed One teach?" And they each expounded their wrong doctrine, the Sassata-doctrine and so forth. And all these adherents of false doctrine did the king cause to be expelled from the order; those who were expelled were in all sixty thousand. And now he asked the rightly-believing bhikkhus: "What

does the Blessed One teach?" And they answered: "He teaches the Vibhajja-doctrine."

And the monarch asked the thera: "Sir, does the Sambuddha (really) teach the Vibhajja-doctrine?" The thera answered: "Yes." And when the king knew this he was glad at heart and said: "Since the community is (henceforth) purified, sir, therefore should the brotherhood hold the uposatha-festival," and he made the thera guardian of the order and returned to his fair capital; the brotherhood held thenceforth the uposatha-festival in concord.

The story is unambiguous that the king and the great *thera* sat together, that it was the king who asked the questions but accepted the *thera's* verdict about the adequacy of the answers and on that judgment expelled the erring monks.

The final sequence in the purification is the "compilation of the true dhamma," a matter that is solely the provenance of the sangha. The elder Moggaliputta chose a number of learned *bhikkhus*, and together with them compiled the true dhamma as was done in the preceding two great councils. Finally, he set forth the Kathavatthu (a work of the Abhidhamma) refuting the other heretical doctrines. "Thus was this council under the protection of King Asoka ended by the thousand *bhikkhus* in nine months."

This account of the purification of the sangha in the time of Asoka can be shown to have acted down the ages as a model procedure imitated by the Buddhist kings of Ceylon and Siam. For example, as clearly stated in his *katikavata*, Parakramabahu I (whose reign in the twelfth century is credited with having influenced Sukhodaya Buddhism) had the Asokan model in mind when he conducted his historic purification.

Parakramabahu I received the help of the Maha-thera Dimbulagala Maha-Kasyapa. The king summoned to the capital the Thera Nanapala of Anurādhapura, the leading bhikkhus of Sabaragamuva, the grammarian Moggallana, the Thera Nagindapalliya, and Thera Nanda of Selantara monastery who represented the bhikkhus of Rohana. The bhikkhus of the Mahavihara were summoned by the king to take part in the proceedings.

Parakramabahu I, in the manner of Asoka, first acquainted himself with a knowledge of the laws of the Buddha which enabled him "to discriminate between failure and non-failure." He himself was present as the protector of the court on the occasion of the proceedings. According to the Nikaya-samgrahaya the proceedings were held in the Latamandapa. The king is said to have stood on his feet throughout the entire night taking part in the proceedings. At the end of it, all the unworthy bhikkhus were expelled, and were given the garb of laymen. In order that they may not harm the Sasana again, they were assigned lucrative positions by the king. It was at the end of the Sasana-visodhana that the MPK was promulgated (Ratnapala 1971, p. 22).

In reviewing the historic significance of the Sinhalese *katikavata* we should highlight a few features that are central to the concerns of this book insofar as it seeks to investigate recurrent and deeply embedded features of the Thai case.

1. The *sasana katikavatas*, periodically assented to by the entire purified sangha, cover rules concerning *pabbajja* and *upasampada* ordinations, rules relating to *nissaya* (the practice of living in proximity to a senior *bhikkhu* of at least 10-years' service), rules pertaining to the daily monastic routine, rules regulating *sanghakammas* (ceremonies and acts). These rules are examples of concerns that impinge on the internal aspects of monastic recruitment, religious study, and life. The *katikavatas* also importantly concern themselves with the areas of a *bhikkhu's* life that come into contact with laymen and with the political authority – examples of the former are rules governing relations with laymen, the acceptance of requisites and gifts from them, the practice of forbidden engagements (which entails the study of poetry and drama, attendance on sick laymen, the practice of astrology, the conduct of spirit rites, the direct dealing in real estate, etc.); an example of the latter are rules relating to the acceptance of titles, offices, and honors that are awarded by the king and result in an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

2. The *katikavatas* thus give important evidence of status differentiation and hierarchical positions within the community of *bhikkhus* from the times of early Buddhism: In thirteenth-century Ceylon, a series of titles, offices, and honors had been evolved, which signified both a certain level of country-wide ecclesiastical structuring buttressed by political authority and a ranking of monks within the monastic communities themselves. The Dambadeni Katikavata, for example, refers to Mahasvami Samgharaksita as being the patron of the *sasana* (i.e., head of the sangha) of the time, and that the *sasana* was divided between the Gamavasins headed by a *bhikkhu* of *maha-sthavira* status and the Arannavasins headed by another *maha-sthavira*. The title of *maha-sthavira* was usually given a monk of 20 years' standing, a *sthavira* title to a *bhikkhu* of 10 years' standing who had mastered certain texts and had been examined in them. Moreover, the *bhikkhus* were stratified into "the senior theras, juniors and those of the middle grade" (with the novices of course being placed at the bottom). A *pandupalasa* (literally a "withered leaf") had to live at least one year in proximity to a teacher before he was granted *pabajja* ordination; while freedom from *nissaya* was granted a *bhikkhu* when he had shown the required level of mastery of texts and of practice of precepts. Finally, it is relevant to note that the holding of *upasampada* ordinations was controlled by the sangha but subject to royal approval, a stipulation that can be traced to the Polonnaruva period.

3. The next point of interest is the frequent allegations of corruption and laxity among the *bhikkhus* and the consequent succession of purifications and writing of *katikavata* charters in the history of Sinhalese Buddhism. Taking the Polonnaruva period alone, what are we to make of facts of this order? Parakramabahu I found the sangha to be extremely corrupt and lax (the *Mahavamsa* accused the monks of being diligent not so much in the observance of precepts as "in the filling of their bellies which they

considered their sole duty"); in spite of his reforms, soon after his death the *sasana* suffered a severe setback and Nissankamalla found it imperative to promulgate another *katikavata;* then Vijayabahu III (1232–1236), having claimed the throne, repeated the same acts of purification; but in spite of his efforts the *sasana* degenerated rapidly and his successor Parakrama Bahu II is associated with the famous Dambadeni Katikavata. And thus the story of the purifications unrolls with regularity right into the Kandyan period of the time of Kirti Sri Rajasimha I (1747–1782) and Rajadhi-Rajasimha (1782–1798). The same story is true of the great Anuradhapura period of Sinhala Buddhism, when between the period A.D. 209 and A.D. 923 at least nine kings are recorded as having conducted purifications of the *sasana* (Ratnapala 1971, p. 221).

4. Thus, it is clear that the acts of purification of the sangha were a frequent and endemic feature of the Sinhala Buddhist polities (which is also paralleled in the Burmese and Siamese counterparts). The question is why they should have happened so frequently. An unmistakable correlation is that the degeneration and restoration of the sangha kept pace with the political collapses and revivals of kings and their reigns. We have already explored some of the reasons for the instabilities and pulsating qualities of the traditional Southeast Asian polities. The Ceylon of the Polonnaruva period was subject to severe political instabilities and economic disruptions on account of south Indian invasions. A good case in point is the Magha invasion after the death of Parakrama Bahu I. The Magha forces are described as wreaking havoc on the people, their homes, the image houses, *cetiyas* and *viharas.* Thus forced evacuations of *bhikkhus,* the loss of their books and texts, were not unimportant causes of the decline of the *sasana.* The close link between the fortunes of kings and the fortunes of the sangha is appositely remarked on by a *katikavata* that attributed the decline of the *sasana* "to the absence of a king like him (Sri Parakramabahu of Kotte 1412–67), who was endowed with faith and wisdom, and who was helpful to the Sasana" (Ratnapala p. 166).

No doubt, sectarianism within the sangha was a development that could under certain conditions lead to its decline, especially when royal favor was sought and conferred for mutually beneficial reasons on one rather than another sect and when sects competed for endowments and material support from royal and lay patrons. Indeed, there is some evidence of schisms in the sangha in Ceylon during the early Anuradhapura period being partially correlated at least with palace politics. The history of these events has come down to us in the writings of one of the factions to the disputes, the Mahavihara fraternity, but the partiality of the account does not negate the factuality of the schisms themselves. From the early period let us choose two examples:[9]

[9] Ray (ed.) 1959, Vol. I, Ch. 9; Rahula 1956; Hettiarachchy 1972. Arnold Green's groundbreaking essay "Sangha and King: The Structure of Authority in Medieval Ceylon" (1961, unpublished) examines these schisms and argues a thesis that in im-

1. The most notorious factional disputes in the Sinhalese sangha relate to the rivalry between the Mahavihara monastery, which is alleged to be the orthodox faction, and the Abhayagiri Vihara, which is associated with the championing of deviant doctrines. We gather that Abhayagiri's coming into prominence coincides with the fifteenth year after the accession of Vattagamani Abhaya, when a faction broke away from the authority of the Mahavihara under the leadership of a *thera* named Mahatissa and took up residence at Abhayagiri, there to be joined soon afterward by monks from Pallavarama monastery in India who on account of their distinctive doctrinal views were called the Dhammaruci.[10] Now, it appears that Mahatissa (and his followers) had in fact helped Vattagamani to regain the throne (c. 89–77 B.C.) when he was in exile and as a reward was granted a gift of a new *vihara,* the Abhayagiri itself. Mahatissa's expulsion from the Mahavihara was a result of being "charged with the offence of frequenting the families of laymen, i.e., in modern parlance, meddling in politics," as Paranavitana expressively informs us (Ray 1959), p. 245). Finally we learn that the new Dhammaruci sect based in Abhayagiri enjoyed the patronage of the king and thus grew in influence and numbers (pp. 245–246).

2. Apparently three centuries later the same Abhayagiri Vihara was to become the host for Mahayana Buddhist views, and this sectarian advocacy seems to have been again closely related to the politics of kingship. In the following sequence we clearly have signs of oscillating royal patronage for different sects, no doubt dictated by the exigencies of political support.

The reign of Voharitissa (A.D. 209–231) brought sectarian rivalries to a boil. According to a version of the story,[11] the Abhayagiri championed the Vetuliya (Skt.: Vaitulya) Mahayanist doctrines. The king authorized a minister named Kapilla "who was versed in all the sciences" to conduct an inquiry, and upon his pronouncement that these doctrines were not the words of the Buddha, the king had the Vetuliya scriptures consigned to the fire and thus "illuminated the religion of the Buddha" (p. 250). We may note that in this "purification" the king delegates to his minister his role as questioner as portrayed to us in the Asokan and later Sinhalese traditions.[12]

portant ways supports ours: His two main points are "that the Sangha considered as a formal organization has consistently shown a chronic and special instability arising from the problem of authority; and second, that the Sangha considered in the general context of Sinhalese society has always been immediately and directly involved in shaping both the forms of political authority and the goals of political power." This essay deserves to be more widely known.

10 The Dhammaruci belonged to the Vajjiputtaka sect, allegedly one of the 18 sects into which early Buddhism had split before its establishment in Ceylon.

11 The source cited by Paranavitana is *Nikāya-smagraha.*

12 Hettiarachchy gives another and earlier precedent when King Bhatika Abhaya, finding it difficult to settle a dispute between the two monasteries, Mahavihara and Abhayagiri, whose brethren he had assembled together, appointed an *amacca* (minister) to adjudicate. "The *amacca* asked the brotherhood to recite their *suttas* and finally gave his verdict in favour of the Mahavihara" (1972, p. 122).

A few decades later, Gothabhaya is alleged to have repeated the repression in his fourth regnal year, when this time the inmates of the Abhayagiri itself had splintered into two groups, one for and one against the Vetuliya doctrines. The latter group seceded under the leadership of Ussiliya Tissa and took up residence in the Dakkhina Vihara. Gothabhaya, taking the side of orthodoxy took forceful measures against the secessionists: He seized 60 of them, branded them, and banished them from the island. They found refuge in the Cola country in southern India.

But from that place of exile, a disciple of the punished leader, Samghamitta by name, is described as staging a comeback. Having won Gothabhaya's favor, he was made tutor to the king's two sons. He succeeded in converting the king's younger son to the Vetuliya doctrine but not the older son, during whose reign Samghamitta went into voluntary exile after failing to displace him in favor of his convert prince. But as soon as this aspirant prince, Mahasena, did ascend the throne, he returned with haste and set about actively propagating and implementing his plans. Thus the first half of Mahasena the great tank builder's reign witnessed the persecution of Mahavihara monks and the desolation of the monastery itself, according to the tale told by the *Mahavansa.*

Mahasena was in turn faced with a civil rebellion that led to the assassination of the *thera* Samghamitta and the death of the king's minister active in the execution of the earlier religious policy. In this civil war there apparently was popular sympathy shown in favor of the Mahavihara establishment, and the king acquiesced by ordering the restoration of the *vihara.* But the reconciliation did not last long, for we find that Mahasena, against the resistance of the Mahavihara monks, built the Jetavana Vihara, within the consecrated boundaries of the Mahavihara, adorning it with the largest stupa in the island, and vesting the incumbency in a monk named Tissa, who belonged to the Sagaliya school of the Dakkhina Vihara.

The reign of Mahasena is a somewhat extraordinary climactic time for the mushrooming of sects and for what looks like a test of strength between the orthodox Mahavihara establishment and the power of the king when he either attempted to correct the alleged disciplinary misdemeanor of its inmates or to intrude on its land rights. It is suggestive that Mahasena's reign probably witnessed an expansion of the rice econ-

The question arises as to whether there are "limits" to such royal adjudication directly or through an appointed minister. Hettiarachchy gives us an interesting judgment of the king's overstepping the bounds. King Kanirajanu Tissa is described as having adjudicated a lawsuit in the *uposathagara* (chapter house) of the Cetiyapabbata Vihara. Sixty monks dissatisfied with the decision plotted to assassinate the king within the *uposathagara* itself but failed to carry it out and lost their lives. Comments Hettiarachchy: ". . . neither the king nor any layman had any right to intervene in a dispute arising within the *uposathagara,*" on the doctrinal ground that the *uposathagara* was a place reserved for the sangha to carry out their acts (*sanghakamma*) relating to the breach of *vinaya* rules, and that when the king "interfered in an affair of the *uposathagara* and gave his decision he was carrying the royal patronage a little too far and caused the Sangha to disobey *vinaya* rules" (pp. 135–136).

omy as a result of his enthusiastic policy of building irrigation works: Sixteen tanks and canals are attributed to him (including the Elahera, Minneriya, and Kandulla schemes). That this prosperity might coincide with expanding religious horizons and contact with religious developments in India and with the king's possession of increased resources to act as benefactor to new foundations is probable. As also is the prospect that Mahasena's era represents a stronger moment of the pulsating traditional polity, when attempts are made to enlarge and unify control.[13] Sectarianism after Mahasena did not come to a boil for some time, and kings seemed to have followed a judicious policy of even-handed treatment of the Mahavihara, Abhayagiri, and Jetavana fraternities.

In these examples cited there is no doubt that sect formation and rivalries ramify with kingship and the polity. Interesting as the information is, we are faced with puzzles and inadequate understanding of the logic and concatenation of the events. Paranavitana indicates in no uncertain terms that the actual doctrinal differences between the Mahavihara and the Abhayagiri fraternities were trivial, that the mutual recriminations and accusations related to hairsplitting details of disciplinary conduct (the propriety of using fans with ivory handles, the counting of age of an ordinand from his conception or birth, the procedure for conferring ordination, the permissibility of spitting on the ground after cleaning teeth with a brush) and that the root of the rivalry may have been grounded in the growing affluence of the Abhayagiri. Its monastic grounds were more extensive, its edifices equal to or more magnificent than the Mahavihara's.

But we are still left in the dark about many matters. What was the basis for the monasteries and monks' alleged political strength and their ability at times to affect the outcome of wars of succession and the stability of the kingdom? What were their numbers, what social segments were they recruited from, and what their place as the literate and intelligentsia of their time – information vital to infer their political weight. Next, as owners of land endowments and beneficiaries of certain revenues and dues, what was the strength of the lay officials, tenants and occupational categories associated with the monastic owners and overlords; and since the monks were themselves not the direct entrepreneurs, managers and toilers (but the beneficiaries of the income), were they able and in what manner to mobilize the laity of their employ?[14] Moreover, how keen was the compe-

[13] Green makes this corroborating judgment: "The reigns of strong kings are marked by reforms of the Sangha, either by adjustments of the power positions of the three fraternities, or by wholesale purges of undisciplined and corrupt *bhikkhus* throughout the order" (1961).

[14] Paranavitana (Ray 1960) is of the view that the principal monasteries were endowed with extensive landed properties, and a numerous lay administrative and supervisory staff managed a large population of tenants. Also various kinds of artisans in the service of monasteries were remunerated with land allotments. The Mihintale monastery appears to have managed its property directly through paid lay employees, while the Abhayagiri apparently had recourse to a system of leasing to middlemen. In addition slaves and wage earners were attached to monasteries to attend to their needs.

tition between monasteries for royal and lay favor in the form of land endowments and material gifts?

From the king's side, how was his reliance on monkish sectarian support (or in times of invasion, the refuge given the fleeing ruler by the sangha) effective in winning the throne and keeping it? And how does this support of the monks relate to and weigh against control over fighting men and weapons? How often did rival contenders bid for the support of different groups of monks who could legitimate and sponsor their claims? Finally, to what degree was purification (*sasanavisodhana*) in certain instances a euphemism for victimization for political reasons rather than a moral cleansing dictated by a decline in the monks' way of life? Just as monks' "frequenting the families of laymen" really meant their "meddling in politics"!

It seems to me that if in the allegedly great periods of the Sinhalese Buddhist polities in the Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva eras, the sangha and kingship were the twin pillars of the edifice, and if the moral and political weight of the sangha was as great as is professed not only by the monk-chroniclers but also contemporary Sinhalese historians, then a possible envisagement of the sangha-in-the-polity might be on these lines: In the traditional polity the great monastic establishments not only in the capital but elsewhere in the agricultural settlements may have been nodal points of "centricity"; as communities of the religious themselves they were centers of learning, literacy, and educational dissemination and therefore the ideologists and ritualists; and as economic *rentiers* and beneficiaries and redistributors they were articulated with agricultural settlements and the economy at large.[15] It is possible that in that time the network and grid that would relate settlements into a wider framework was realized largely, if not solely, in this form. Such networks, whose monastic nodes were royally endowed and guaranteed and were disseminators of a culturally unifying religion (*sasana*), may well have enjoyed an important mobilizing structural capability in a traditional galactic polity of royal power hedged around with local principalities and decentralized autonomies. But it is clear that the monastic network itself was not always monolithic as evidenced by the emergence of dissenting sects and the differentiation into provincial or satellite frameworks.

Thus one cannot lay at rest the question of the sangha's frequent decline by merely indicating external circumstances of warfare and political instability and of the implication of sect formation in the politics of king-

Furthermore, there is some evidence of some monks being famed irrigation architects and engineers; but scarcely any evidence on to what extent the monasteries themselves initiated irrigation works on their lands, had connections with merchant guilds, and themselves engaged in banking, lending, and other monetary activities.

[15] In this connection we should note that the fraternities such as Mahavihara and Abhayagiri had other residences beside the central residence in the capital. The Mahavihara is supposed to have been composed of "five great residences" (*panca maha avasa*). Schisms and factions have a more congenial breeding ground in the context of a network of parent and dependent monasteries.

ship. The basic structural fact of decentralized monastic communities carries with it the long-term trend of parochialization, of regional differentiation, and of diversity of adherence to disciplinary rules and *sangha kamma*. Such a disposition is in line with the other facts of the galactic polity. This is perhaps a reason why political authority, especially one that is expanding and centralizing, might be tempted to integrate and unify the sangha.

Finally, one has also to probe internal reasons for institutionalized monastic life becoming lax and thereby necessitating the political authority's (whose legitimacy rests partly on the possession of a "pure" sangha) acting as watchdog and maintaining the motivation levels of *bhikkhus* to practice their avocations assiduously.

The Sinhalese *katikavatas* indirectly give telling evidence of internally generated propensities to the sangha's decline. There is the ever-present threat of distorted relations with laymen developing: through the practice of *tirasana-vijja* (animal sciences) such as the "base" arts, astrology, spirit rites; through teaching sons of householders and deriving material benefits in return; through amassing *pudgalika* (personal) endowments of land; through inhabiting lay dwelling houses and the like. There is the ever-present tendency for ordination of novices and monks to take place without ensuring proper qualifications among the recruits, a tendency that is held in check by requiring royal approval for holding ordinations. There is the only too human possibility that monks and novices might settle down to leading an indolent life, forgetting that learning and meditation should be their primary activities. Finally, there is the constant danger that the *bhikkhus* might commit sexual offenses, thereby violating their celibate life. The Buddha's recognition of these obstacles is eloquent:

> So long as the brethren shall not engage in, or be fond of, or be connected with business – so long as the brethren shall not be in the habit of, or be fond of, or be partakers in idle talk – so long as the brethren shall not be addicted to, or be fond of, or indulge in slothfulness – so long as the brethren shall not frequent or be fond of, or indulge in society – so long as the brethren shall neither have, nor fall under the influence of, wrong desires – so long as the brethren shall not become the friends, companions, or intimates of evil-doers – so long as the brethren shall not come to a stop on their way (to Nirvana in Arahantship) because they have attained to any lesser thing – so long may the brethren be expected not to decline, but to prosper.
>
> So long as these conditions shall continue to exist among the brethren – so long as they are instructed in these conditions – so long may the brethren be expected not to decline, but to prosper. (*Maha Parinibbana Suttanta*).

Having examined the issues surrounding sangha purification and the ensuing royally enacted charters for the supervision, regulation, and administration of many aspects of the life of the entire sangha, it would help to round off the account with two examples of what kind of administrative machinery resulted in Ceylon as a sequel to royal intervention. I

select two reigns in Ceylon conspicuous and fateful for the reorganization and revival of Buddhism.

The reign of King Parakrama Bahu I (1153–1188) was a period of Buddhist revival and sangha reform in Ceylon, developments that we know heavily influenced the shape of Buddhism in Burma and Siam in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Under Parakrama Bahu's supervision was conducted, as we have already described, not only a purification of the sangha (in the form of expulsion of monks for violating the *vinaya* discipline) but also a unification whereby the contending factional sects (represented by the Mahavihara, Abhayagiri, and Jetavana *nikayas*) were brought together and reconciled.[16] The three major sects had themselves fragmented into some eight independent fraternities or establishments, and King Parakrama Bahu's unification consisted in appointing a *mahasvami* as head of the sangha (we would today recognize this as equivalent to *sangharaja*) and in recognizing the bifurcation of the sangha into divisions, the *gramavasi* monks (town- and village-dwelling monks) and the *arannika* (forest-dwelling hermit monks) each with its own head. Finally, the eight fraternities constituted the base of the system. While on paper this organization looks like a formalized hierarchy, yet it is clear that Parakrama's measures achieved no more than the coexistence of the sangha factions as autonomous communities under a common leadership. At the same time, however, we should appreciate the fact that a strong king attempted to regulate the affairs of the sangha by means of an ecclesiastical hierarchy and that this immediate precedent might plausibly have influenced the subsequent Dambadeni Katikavata, which seems to have been transported together with Sinhalese Buddhism to the early Thai kingdoms of Sukhodaya and Lan Na.[17]

Our second Sinhalese example of the political authority's incursion into sangha affairs as a result of which a system of ecclesiastical authority was instituted comes from events in Ceylon in the mid-eighteenth century, when this time King Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747–1782) sponsored a Buddhist

[16] For a full documentation see R. A. L. H. Gunawardene (1965, 1966). Ratnapala (1971) has already been cited. Bechert (1970) also has references to this and other purifications.

[17] Bechert asserts that the Dambadeni Katikavata promulgated in the reign of Parakrama Bahu II (1236–1271) contains details of the organizational structure of the sangha, which "structure has formed the basis of Sangha organization for Ceylon and Southeast Asian Buddhism up until today. The Sangha of Ceylon was at that time divided into two sections: *gamavaism* (village monks) and *araññavasin* (forest monks). Each of these sections was headed by a *mahasthavira* who was the president of a central council or *karakasanghasabha*. These two mahasthaviras were elected not by the particular section but by the leading *theras* (elders in the Order) of both sections so that in spite of the practical division of the Sangha, the juridical unity was represented by the two mahasthaviras. One of them was appointed *mahasvami* – (called *sangharaja* since the 15th century). Together the two mahasthaviras (later called *mahanayakas* resp. *mahanayakatheras*) exercised considerable authority and powers over the *ganas*, i.e., groups of viharas or monastic units, and the viharas, headed in turn by a *viharadhipati*" (1970, p. 765).

revival and the reestablishment of *upasampada* ordination of monks with Siamese help. This help was recognized by calling the order of monks Siyam Nikaya (Siamese sect), a name that persists to this day. Kirti Sri also attempted to give the sangha a formal centralized organization, so that the sangha's affairs may be regulated and, no doubt, politically supervised. The outlines of this centralization were as follows:[18]

The Malwatte and Asgiriya monasteries located in the capital city of Kandy were elevated to a position of superiority above all other monasteries, which thus were placed under their jurisdiction. No overall head of the sangha – the *sangharaja* or his equivalent – was appointed,[19] but each of the two divisions under the headship of Malwatte and Asgiriya (representing the dual division into village monks and forest monks respectively) possessed its own separate hierarchy consisting of a supreme head (*mahanayaka*) and his two deputies (*anu nayaka*), who were assisted by a committee of chief monks (*nayakas*) in the conduct of monastic administration. Each parallel hierarchy had disciplinary juridical control over its member monks and monasteries. Furthermore, the two preeminent monasteries, Malwatte and Asgiriya, *alone* were given exclusive powers of ordaining monks, which meant that candidates for ordination from all over the island had to congregate at the capital for their ordination held at the beginning of the rainy season. Finally, we may also note that Kirti Sri reactivated an old rule that only men of the highest and dominant *goyigama* caste were eligible to become monks, thus aligning the sangha with the caste system. Buddhism and the sangha became established in a real sense in that the titles to the land endowments of monasteries, the caste services of tenants settled on the lands that were necessary for the conduct of Buddhist temple ceremonial, the titles to ecclesiastical office, and the security and protection of the monasteries were directly or indirectly guaranteed and upheld by the king and his functionaries.

Finally, let us turn to Burma to establish the fact that the Burmese sangha was also familiar with an overall hierarchical organization. Old Burma had an ecclesiastical structure just prior to British annexation (of lower Burma in 1852 and upper Burma in 1886) resulting in the subsequent disestablishment of Buddhism. Smith (1965) informs us that the king appointed the *thathanabaing* (i.e., *sangharaja*), the head of the sangha, who in turn appointed regional (*gainggyoks*) and other ecclesiastical officers. The *thathanabaing's* authority to settle disputes concerning monastic property and other matters, punish and expel disorderly monks, and in general maintain discipline within the sangha was guaranteed and enforced by government officers appointed by the king. How much this Burmese tradition and example provided a precedent for organizational

[18] A fuller account is to be found in Malalgoda (1970); also see Hardy (1860).

[19] Bechert (1970) reports that Kirti Sri appointed a monk named Valivita Saranankara, who helped the king in implementing the reforms *mahasvami* or *sangharaja*.

reforms of the sangha instituted by Thai kings in the nineteenth century is a matter for inquiry.

But we should not overvalue these examples of attempted imposition of a unified hierarchy of control. Time and again, we must place these blueprints against the background of the actual sociopolitical constitution of the society, which oscillated within the limits of the more usual weaker state and the more unusual stronger state of the traditional polity. Wherever we look – at the Anuradhapura era or the Polonnaruva era or the Kandyan era, which concludes in 1815 – evidence is at hand that the Sinhalese kingdoms conformed to our model of the pulsating galactic polity for which the chroniclers' claim that the island was united and unified under Buddhism was the overarching rainbow in the sky.

The Anuradhapura kingdoms up to the fourth century A.D. really resolved at best into the king's sway in the north-central, northwestern, and perhaps northern regions of Rajarattha and in the periphery into the sway of principalities on a smaller scale but replicating the central model. These latter were ruled by local rulers and rajas, their locations being regions such as those of Uva, Kalyani, and the most renowned of all, Ruhuna:[20] Twelfth-century Polonnaruva was put together on the same lines: The alleged unification under a Vijayabahu I or Parakrama Bahu I (as was the case with the earlier Anuradhapura's Duthagamani) is represented as being achieved by a hero in one of the petty regional principalities (usually Ruhuna) making his way to Rajarattha and uniting much of the island, center and periphery for a brief period, only to have these unities fragment again to their satellite condition and maintain their coherence by the usual marital alliances between the rulers and the admitted cultural and ceremonial dominance of the capital city.[21] Finally, nearer our time in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the interior Sinhalese kingdom pivoted on the hill capital of Kandy, had its petty principalities enduringly in the far north regions of Vanni and Nuvarakalaviya and periodically in Uva and Sabaragamuwa in which the king's writ and the authority of his ministers had a variable impact. Kirti Sri Rajasinha's reforms in Kandy, which we have adverted to earlier, are really an attempt to pull together a society fast resolving into its cells and centrifugal entities. As Leach (1959) has cogently argued, Wittfogel's model of oriental despotism resting on a hydraulic base and controlled by a powerful bureaucracy is scarcely applicable to the political entities under consideration.

[20] For example, Hettiarachchy concludes that the authority of the royal town of Anuradhapura was felt, by and large, mostly in the area north of the Maya Oya and, second, that local authority flourished most in the area south of the central highlands. And as may be expected, the interstitial areas of Kegalle and Matale show less frequent evidence of being petty principalities.

[21] Hettiarachchy (1972), Ray (1959, 1960); Liyanagamage (1972).

10. The Sangha and the Polity: From Ayutthaya to Bangkok

We have paid some attention to Asokan and Sinhalese traditions in the previous chapter in order that we may better understand the dialectics of the relationship between the sangha and the political authority in Thailand. There is in fact an established historical tradition for an ecclesiastical organization and hierarchy, paralleling the secular, periodically regulated by king and polity – a tradition that confirms the Sinhalese precedents.

It is proposed to study in some detail the idiom and rhetoric of sangha purification, the circumstances encouraging such intervention by the political authority, and the details of the administrative hierarchy set up as a consequence, during the Bangkok period. We shall particularly concentrate on Rama I, Rama IV (Mongkut), and on the Sangha Act of 1902 (enacted by Rama V [Chulalongkorn]), and the acts of 1941 and 1963 promulgated in the postrevolutionary period ushered in in 1932. But before we undertake that examination, we must marshal whatever evidence we can concerning the nature of sangha organization in the Ayutthayan era and how it may have been linked with the secular administrative machinery.

The Sangha Organization in the Ayutthaya Era

The assumption that in Thailand a national organization of the sangha directly related to the political authority of the king and his administration only became established in the first reign of the present Chakkri dynasty (which started in 1782) is not strictly accurate and may well surprise us in the light of the Sinhalese historical precedents for such an organization that we have already cited. Furthermore, the Burmese evidence seems to show that Burma too had a tradition of ecclesiastical hierarchy that, as in Ceylon, materialized under powerful kings and became shadowy under weak kings. Were there not powerful kings of Sukhodaya or Ayutthaya who ventured to strengthen and regulate the sangha by giving it a centralized organization? A source of information for Ayutthaya times is Van Vliet, who had charge of the Dutch East India Company's interests in Siam from 1629 to 1634.

Referring to the "monasteries of the priests . . . built all round the temples," "ingeniously and expensively decorated with panels and relief

work, the inside and outside . . . beautifully gilded and painted," Van Vliet says:

In these monasteries are many priests (who live in peace), who are divided under priors and other ecclesiastical officers (who rule with great discipline and have much power), and they again have to obey the highest regents, namely the four bishops of the principal temples of Judia. The bishop of the Nappetat has the supreme dignity.

The ecclesiastical power of these bishops is astonishingly great, their person is held in great respect and honor but they have to obey the king in worldly affairs. In Judia there are about 20,000 ecclesiastics. Their number in the whole country cannot be exactly ascertained but without doubt it is more than four times the number in Judia. . . .

. . . They live partly on what the king and the mandarins bestow on them, also on fruits and profits derived from the grounds which belong to the church. But most they receive from the common people, who furnish them with food and other necessities (Van Ravenswaay 1910, pp. 76–77).

It is difficult to derive a clear picture from Van Vliet's account. He does describe a hierarchy, but how formalized it was is uncertain. We gather that the abbots of individual monasteries enjoyed great power within their houses and that among the "400 fine temples and monasteries" in the capital, four royal wat were considered superior, with their abbots holding administrative offices of considerable power, with one among them (probably the palace wat) and its abbot ranking highest.

Now De La Loubère's valuable information (1693) pertaining to the Ayutthaya of the late seventeenth century gives us a weaker picture of the ecclesiastical organization described by Van Vliet.[1] He makes no mention of an official hierarchy or of superior temples and office-holding monks exercising jurisdiction over others but only (in the context of heads of monasteries enjoying separate jurisdictions) of a respect or prestige hierarchy based probably on the distinction between abbots of royal wat and ordinary wat, with the head of the palace wat being the most respected of them all. However, De La Loubère makes clear that only certain superior abbots enjoyed the privilege of ordaining monks. He deserves to be quoted in full, for his remarks throw light on the situation two centuries later.

Every convent is under the conduct of a superior called Tchaou-Vat [*chao-wat*], that is to say, Lord or Master of the convent; but all the Superiors are not of equal dignity: the most honourable are those which they call Sancrat, and Sancrat of the Convent of the Palace is the most reverend of all. Yet no superior, nor no Sancrat, has authority or jurisdiction over another. . . .

The missionaries have compared the Sancrats to our bishops, and the simple

[1] Virginia Thompson is of the view that "in 1577 it was definitely stated that the administration of the order for the first time would be divided into a northern and a southern section. Although this arrangement persisted, it remained so embryonic in form that in the seventeenth century De La Loubère remarked on the absence of any religious hierarchy; and this continued to be the state of affairs until Mongkut's reforms in the first half of the nineteenth century" (1941, p. 625).

superiors to our curates. . . . None but the Sancrats indeed can make talapoins, as none but bishops can make priests. But otherwise the Sancrats have not any jurisdiction nor any authority, neither over the people, nor over the talapoins, which are not of their convent; and they could not inform me whether they have any particular character which makes them Sancrats, save that they are superiors of certain convents designed for Sancrats. . . .

The King of Siam gives to the principal Sancrats a name, an umbrella, a sedan, and some men to carry it; but the Sancrats do not make use of this equipage, only to wait upon the king, and they never are talapoins that carry the sedan. The Sancrat of the palace is now called Pra Viriat (p. 144).

By the term "sancrat" (*sangkharat*) De La Loubère appears to refer to the abbots of royal wat who were given special titles. But there is probably more to it if we relate the structure of the polity to that of the sangha hierarchy. During the Ayutthayan era, it appears that the highest-ranking monks in many of the principalities/provinces (*muang*) governed indirectly by the king (as was usual in the traditional polity) held the title of *sangkharat*. It is during the Bangkok period that the *sangkharat* resident in the capital was made the titular head of all the *bhikkhus* in the kingdom, and the expansion of the central government's rule in the principalities and provinces led to the subordination of the provincial *sangkharat*.[2]

Wales' classic study of *Ancient Siamese Government and Administration* (1934) contains interesting references to certain civil administrative and judicial structures charged with overseeing and regulating monastic conduct. It is difficult to evaluate how effective the laws on paper were on the ground.

We are informed that one of the features of the functionally differentiated administrative system instituted by King Paramatrailokanatha in the fifteenth century (as described in the Law of Civil Hierarchy) was the setting up, below the six major *kroms*, a set of six lesser *kroms* headed by six *mantri*, of which one was the *Krom Dharmakara*. The chief of this last *krom* had a higher rating than the other *mantri* (with a *sakdina* grade of 10,000). Wales translates this *krom's* name as the "Department of Church Administration" and says that its chief "appointed officials (*khun hmun dharmakhara*) in every province to supervise the behaviour of the monks; and in a special court attached to the department, he tried cases in which monks were accused of serious offences. It was also through his agency that the king appointed high dignitaries of the church throughout the country" (1934, p. 93).

The court itself was called *Sala Krahdrvan Dharmakara*, and it dealt with monks and novices accused of serious offenses after they had first been unfrocked and expelled from the order. Otherwise, a Buddhist monk could only be brought into a secular court as a witness.

[2] See Wenk for an account of the organization of the province of Phathalung at the beginning of Rama I's reign (1968, Ch. 3).

Wales makes the acute observation for the Ayutthayan period, which is not irrelevant for later times, that "the Buddhist monks as a class remained in a fluid and unstable condition," because only a few followed the calling throughout their lives or for that matter for longer than on a temporary basis. "The Order included a few princes and a considerable number of retired officials, but in the main it consisted of freemen, slaves not being admitted. The freemen who formed the main body of the monks, although privileged to the extent of being excused from all taxation and service to the government while members of the Order, were, in the vast majority of cases, only temporarily removed from the power of their natural patrons and from the necessity of serving the state" (p. 57).

But disappointingly Wales' understanding of the relationship between Buddhism and kingship, and the sangha's regulation by the political authority, is defective on certain points. While Wales brings to our attention the intriguing fact of a "Buddhist" king being installed and fortified with rites and functionaries who are "brahmanic," he tends to see the latter feature as a separate, not integral, component of the total complex. We have already argued that the conceptions of *dharmaraja* and *devaraja*, that is, of kingship as an encompassing phenomenon of the Buddhist polity, can and does incorporate and place brahmanical ritual usages within its cosmology.

Wales is historically incorrect when he asserts that the "religious hierarchy is of a quite modern development" (pp. 237–238). Moreover, he is not fully able to solve for us a central problem posed by the Theravada polities: What are the implications of the fact that the king "accepted the headship of the Order as its lay protector, a position traditionally associated with Buddhist kingship"? The question of a lay political authority acting as the protector and head of a religious order does produce an effect that Wales acutely identifies as follows: ". . . the very acceptance of a layman as protector of the Order tended in some measure . . . to the secularization of its administration" (p. 240). The decrees of the first reign of the Chakkri dynasty included in the corpus called *Kathmay Brah Sangha* were not only concerned with the smallest details of monastic discipline but also were addressed to both monks and lay officials, such as provincial governors, to obtain their cooperation in implementing them. But Wales glosses these acts as being the product of "abnormal times" – "the Order had but recently recovered from the effects of the Burmese invasion, while even more recently the extravagant claims of King Tak in his madness had demoralized a large section of the monks. Strong steps had therefore to be taken to bring about the purification of religion . . ." (p. 240). What is inadequate about this commentary is the failure to observe that "abnormal times" occurred not infrequently in these Buddhist polities and that, apart from times of stress, there was a *perennial* tendency for the political authority to regulate the sangha by devising an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

In the context of this particular line of argument it is apposite to face

squarely the problems of what the king's protection of the sangha was *usually* understood to be. Apart from matters such as the political authority's guaranteeing and protecting sangha endowments of property, of giving physical protection from the attacks of enemies and disorderly elements, we must concede that usually the king's protection consisted in taking action against the alleged laxity or degeneracy among the monks. Prince Dhani himself has argued this point that the king's protection was not necessarily directed against external encroachments as against the monk's own failings (1964).[3]

The particles of information we have reported concerning the political authority's participation in the administration and supervision of the sangha enable us to perceive that the ninteenth- and twentieth-century Sangha Acts, which constitute elaborate blueprints for ecclesiastical administration, are not pure innovations but have important precedents, as, for example, the longstanding civil department for the administration of sangha affairs. We may also note here that the enormous corpus of Ayutthayan law texts that Rama I at the beginning of the Chakkri dynasty revised and promulgated as the new *thammasat* of the land contains as one of its "chapters" the *Kathmai Brah Sangha* (Buddhist Monastic Law). It is uncertain whether monastic law was previously in Ayutthayan times incorporated into the *thammasat* – it could well be that Rama I set a new precedent by having his edicts relating to the sangha incorporated into the country's legal code.

Rama I: Founder of a Dynasty and Restorer of Religion

Rama I's royal acts lend themselves to matching with the classical paradigms of purification and revival of the *sasana* in great reigns. As the first representative of a new dynasty, Rama I engaged in acts that bear the characteristic marks of an assertive king seeking legitimacy and stability within the orthodoxy of a Buddhist polity. These acts are the purification of the sangha, the enactment of new sangha laws, the sponsorship of a revised Buddhist canon and a new version of the historic cosmological work, *Traiphum*.

As did many kings before him who established themselves after a period of political chaos, Rama I found it necessary to reorganize and purify the sangha, which had at first suffered from the ravages of the Burmese war of 1767 and, subsequently, had been embroiled in schismatic dissension during the later years of King Taksin's reign. The destruction of the capital of Ayutthaya resulted in its eventual abandonment and the fleeing of its population, both monks and laymen. In the chaotic years following 1767, monasteries were looted, images and texts destroyed or lost, and monks forced to find refuge in the south.

[3] Prince Dhani, *Monarchical Protection of the Buddhist Church in Siam*, Sarnath, 1964, p. 1. This reference is cited by Rabibhadana (1969), p. 49.

In the early years of his reign King Taksin had quelled a political movement among dissident monks, which though aberrant, as we have already noted, is a recurring form of millenarian Buddhism more commonly known in Burma than in Thailand. That the movement manifested itself in the north is not unrelated to the fact that it had been influenced by Burmese religious notions and practices. When Ayutthaya fell, a group of dissident monks in the northern principality of Sawangburi and Uttaradit had seized political power. The leader, Phra Fang, organized the monks in army-style ranks and changed the color of their robes to red.[4] The rebellious monks lived as laymen, forsaking the disciplinary rules, and conducted affairs of civil government. Although by 1770 Phra Fang had seized Phitsanulok, Taksin was able to pacify the north, capturing many of these monks, and, after trial by water, flogged and burned the robes of those who failed the ordeal (C. Reynolds 1972, Ch. 2).

It therefore comes as an unexpected sequel that this same Taksin the purifier soon afterward caused a schism within the sangha by making excessive spiritual claims for himself. The allusion here is to Taksin's religious claims to being a *sodaban* or "streamwinner" (the first of the four stages to salvation, the other being once-returner, never-returner, and *arahat*) and to possessing special mystical powers (P.: *iddhi;* Thai: *ithirit*) as a result of practicing meditation. The search for special powers through meditation is an old quest, doctrinally recognized but not recommended for the seeker after nibbana. Taksin's grave error lay in making megalomaniacal claims as a result of his mystical practices and in carrying matters to the intolerable extreme of wanting monks to bow before him and of claiming thereby a superiority and precedence over a *bhikkhu*. (The *Mahavamsa,* we found earlier, was at pains to show the great king Asoka accepting the reverse order of precedence).

Taksin's intemperate claims caused dissension in the sangha as it finally also cost him his throne. The supreme patriarch and two of the highest-ranking monks were demoted for refusing to admit a layman's superior claims over the *bhikkhu* even if he was a *sodaban*. While the majority of monks accepted Taksin's claims, many resisted them. More than 500 monks who had resisted Taksin's claims were flogged and sentenced to menial labor at Wat Hong, the monastery of the new supreme patriarch (C. Reynolds, p. 34). Rama I in turn expelled or demoted monks who were "unworthy" of the elevation to high positions they received from his predecessor, and rehabilitated those who had suffered at his predecessor's hands. Taksin himself, who had abdicated and sought refuge in ordination as a monk, was put to death after trial (Wenk 1968, pp. 5–6).

Rama I underwent two coronation ceremonies, the second one occurring three years later being the full-scale one replete with brahmanical rites. It

[4] The reddish-brown robe was symbolically associated with the *metteya* (*maitriya*), the Buddha-to-come, whose coming is believed to bring heaven to earth and salvation to all.

looks as though he was aware of the need to earn his legitimacy and win his credentials as a ruler by first establishing internal order and reestablishing claims over tributary states. It was during this period that he passed most of the laws that we can recognise as being in the tradition of the Sinhalese *katikavatas*.

During the first two years after his ascension to the throne Rama I issued seven decrees concerning the Buddhist monks in Thailand. Their purpose was to raise the moral level of this class and to restore its prestige and authority. In addition, one more law was passed in each of the following years, 1789, 1794 and 1801. The last law, the tenth, expelled 128 monks from the Buddhist clergy and condemned them to hard labor for "they had been guilty of all kinds of ignoble behaviour, namely drinking, wandering about at night, rubbing shoulders with women, using improper language, buying silly things from Chinese junks (Wenk, p. 39).

It is noteworthy that Law 6 listed as contrary to the dhamma to make a living from these activities to which monks had turned: masseurs, medicine sellers, and astrologers; Law 2, in a higher vein, extolled the necessity of the monks' observance of the Patimokkha if *sasana* is to be sustained, and admonished that the monk who acted with restraint and demonstrated detached control over kin ties would receive expressions of devotion from men and gods (C. Reynolds, pp. 39–40). And Law 3, explicitly directed at the Phra Fang movement and other instigators of revolt claiming supernatural powers, devalued the monks who sought and claimed supernatural powers (*riddhi*): such conduct was declared deceitful and unbecoming (C. Reynolds, p. 41).

The same law required that each monk be identified with a specific monastery and a preceptor who would supervise his conduct. He was also required to obtain a certificate in *khom* script bearing his Pali name, monastery of residence, his preceptor's name, his seniority based on the years of service in the sangha, and a seal of the ranking sangha official in the region where the monastery was located. A monk traveling during the lent rainy season had to carry the certificate with him, and abbots were requested to forward to the departments of religious affairs (the *Krom Sangkhakari* and the *Krom Thammakan*) a register of monks under their supervision (C. Reynolds, pp. 42–43). These registers – which paralleled the civil registers that were kept for manpower mobilization and control – and the requirements regarding rules of residence made possible not only the discouragement of "wandering monks" and vagabondage but also the possibility of a greater overall supervision of *bhikkhus* by the political authority. We may also finally note that the king called upon his civil officials and the relatives of monks to observe the laymen's share of the code of conduct that would help maintain the sangha's integrity, and himself deferred to the supreme patriarch's prior authority to pronounce on disputes and issues of doctrine and *sangha kamma* (acts of procedures).

Another royal act of Rama I in the classical tradition was the production

of a new edition of the Buddhist canon, for which purpose he convened a council of monks and scholars in 1788. Upon being informed that the last revisions had been done in the fifteenth century under the aegis of King Tilokarat of Chiangmai and that the extant Lao and Mon and Khom translations were defective and differed from one another, the king directed the council to restore "the original text" of the canon.

> Two hundred and eighteen monks and thirty-two Buddhist scholars were appointed for this task. The king, the Maha Uparat and the entire court were present at the opening ceremony of the council, which began with a solemn procession. Under the direction of the patriarch the council was then divided into four working committees. . . .
>
> The committees met in various rooms of Wat Mahathat, the seat of the patriarch. . . . After about five months the work of the committees came to an end. The revised texts were written on palm leaf manuscripts; and, after they were gilded on the outside, the manuscripts were kept in a building with a fortified wall expressly constructed for this purpose, Phra Monthop. All who took part in the council received clothing and other gifts from the king, who also defrayed all living expenses of the council during the five months of its duration (Wenk 1968, p. 41).

Thus the king accomplished the ninth revision of the *Tripitaka* accomplished in Theravada Buddhist history, and in doing so he was conscious of his effort to stay the progressive decline of the religion in its allotted span of 5000 years as was predicted in the famous prophecy that was consciously invoked in times of crises when the decline of the polity was seen to be intertwined with the laxness of the *sasana* and the attrition of the dhamma. Religion and polity indexed each other's health.

Another appropriate act at this time of restoration of polity and religion was the king's commissioning of the compilation of a new *Traiphum*, the great cosmological work composed in 1345 by the prince who was to become King Lu-Tai and which among other things propagated the ideas that kingship was necessary for the maintenance and transmission of dhamma and that as a universal monarch (*cakkavatti*) the king, placed at the apex of the world of men, guaranteed a ranked social order of merit-making opportunities, which order in turn took its place in the larger cosmos of the three worlds.

C. Reynolds' description of the events leading to the compilation of the new *Traiphum* reminds us of older accounts: A year after his accession Rama I addressed certain royal questions to the monks (*phraratchaputcha*) in an audience composed of ministers, pundits, and all the monks of the Phra Ratchakana class headed by the supreme patriarch. The king apparently questioned the monks on a number of matters including ways of reckoning time, miracles of the Buddha, the destruction and re-creation of the world, and other cosmological issues and discovered that they were insufficiently familiar with the contents of the *Traiphum* (pp. 56–57).

What this account puts us in mind of is the story of Asoka's asking

questions of monks, before expelling the ignorant ones, at the Third Council, with the *thera* Moggaliputta Tissa sitting by his side. According to the *Mahavamsa* account, the king asked the royal questions while the *thera* pronounced on the doctrinal adequacy of the answers, a pattern that was replicated in the account also of Parakrama Bahu I's conduct of the purification of the sangha in twelfth-century Ceylon. Rama I's questioning, though it does not exactly parallel the classical models yet confirms the tradition of the royal questioning of *bhikkhus*, an event at which he establishes his own knowledge of the dhamma (although a layman) at the same time as he actively ensures the sangha's pursuit of learning.

Hitherto we have represented Rama I as a king who lived the ideology of a Buddhist king; he appears to have been deeply infused with it and at the same time knew how to manipulate it. His rule was an orthodox expression of the concept of *dharmaraja*. At the same time, he was aware that in doing so he was able to stabilize his rule and the dynasty of which he was founder. In such an instance it is futile to separate the living of an ideology from its manipulation.

But there was a sphere in which Rama I was something of an innovator. Perhaps for the purpose of this study the most significant of the purification acts of the new king was his command that a new codification be made of the laws transmitted from the Ayutthaya era.[5] What appears to be particularly significant about this episode is that it leads us not only to an appreciation of the traditional conception of the king as the embodiment and dispenser of dharma (*dharmaraja*) but also illustrates that strong kings do creatively interpret sacred traditions, which are alleged to be transmitted unchanged from the past. The very belief and assertion that an uncontaminated pure expression can be discovered by searching back into the past allows for forging new interpretations attuned to the standards of truth, relevance, and veracity of the later period.

The circumstances leading to the new codification briefly stated are as follows: Apparently on the basis of disagreeing with a particular judgment on a woman's right to take away her own property on divorce initiated by her in spite of the fact that it was she herself who had committed adultery – a judgment it was found did indeed accord with the available legal texts (the three authentic versions of which were kept in the law court, the royal apartment, and the assembly hall for the ministers) – the king declared the laws corrupt and appointed a committee to examine them and codify them anew.

One of the fascinating aspects of this endeavor is that the king directed the committee that the laws "be examined with regard to their agreement with the Pali Canon, and in cases where they did not agree they were to be altered accordingly in order to restore what was believed to be the original text" (Wenk p. 36). This directive is a patent innovation, for historically the traditional laws did not derive, and could not be derived,

[5] For details see Wenk (1968) and, importantly, Prince Dhani (1947, 1955).

from the Pali canon. It illustrates how these changes can be introduced or legitimated in self-consciously Buddhist polities by using the Pali canon as a "charter" in the Malinowskian sense for legal innovation.

Let me now develop the point that starting from India and moving outward into Southeast Asia we can discover certain creative transformations in the politico-legal dharma charters to suit the different local political contexts.

The Mon-Pali influence on Thai kingship can be seen, for instance, in the legal literature (called the *Dhammathat* in Burmese and *Phra Thammasat* in Thai), which passed first from the Mons to the Burmese and from them again to the Thai during the Ayutthaya period. We have already shown in Chapter 6 how the Mon authors, borrowing from the Hindu dharmashastric traditions, forged a new myth of a Manu in the service of King Mahathammata (Mahasammata), the first ruler of the world. Thus, for instance, the Burmese document called *Manugye*, written around 1752, and the Siamese Law of the Three Seals, promulgated by Rama I a few decades later in the early years of the nineteenth century, shared the same myth that placed Manu, the discoverer of divine law, as the minister and servant of the first elected king, Mahathammata, considered an embryo Buddha who performed works of the purest benevolence. Thus the Hindu lawgiver who as first man sprang from the "self-existent" and legislated even for kings in Hindu India is transformed and subordinated in the Buddhist version to a discoverer of law in the service of a benevolent king who is centrally placed as the fountain of justice. Indeed, as Lingat (1950) demonstrates, while in Burma the notion of *dhammasattham* as absolute moral law was considered prior to, and kept separate from, *rajasatham* (the individual acts and practical applications of law by the king), in Thailand, I would argue, Rama I providing us with the first supporting evidence, there was a further evolution of *dhammasattham* in the direction of positive law, whereby royal decisions were directly connected with *dhammasattham* rules. This amalgamation of *rajasatham* with *dhammasattham*, which accepts the principle that the king can himself legislate because he embodies dharma, is no doubt historically connected with the development of powerful and stable dynasties. It is exemplified in Thailand by the Chakkri kings, particularly Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, who were the agents of much change in the nineteenth century.

The Historical Transition

Having matched the acts of Rama I against the classical paradigms of Buddhist kingship, we must turn to our next task, for which Rama I again serves as a starting point. This task is to chart some kind of framework for handling the *continuities* and the *transformations* at work in the historical transition from the era of the galactic polity, well exemplified by the Ayut-

thayan kingdoms, to the era of cumulative political expansion, centralization, and modernization that is the hallmark of the Chakkri era from 1782 onward.

In a sense, the relations between the sangha and the king (representing the polity) that we have hitherto described in their many multiple facets – the ideal separation of the king's and sangha's domains, the formal precedence given the sangha by the king on certain occasions, the dialectic by which the king acts to maintain the sangha's rectitude in circumstances of monastic abuse – these relations characterize the *normative* postulates.

We must also consider what the relation between the sangha and the polity was in *normal* and *abnormal* circumstances. The criteria that are relevant to this issue are measurements of frequency and intervals between the climactic acts of sangha purification. Thus the normal situation in the galactic polities of the type represented by the Sukhodayan and Ayutthayan kingdoms was that both the polity and the monastic system were not tightly knit hierarchical structures but decentralized constellations, so that in actuality their interpenetration was not close at all.

But in abnormal circumstances the relation changed in two directions: (1) When a particular king did exercise effective power and his kingdom expanded and waxed strong, when he won wars and booty and took prisoners, and when he made attempts at greater concentration of power and centralization of administrative machinery – under such a king the sangha tended to be built up as an ecclesiastical hierarchy. This resulted in the paradox that the sangha that was organizationally strengthened was also one that was politically regulated. (2) Conversely, when a king was weak and his immediate territories shrank and his control over his satellites and tributaries weakened – this erosion of political authority also meant the weakening and loss of political protection of the monasteries, with the result that the sangha itself was in danger of decline. This is evidenced by the frequent revival of *upasampada* ordination at the the beginning of many reigns after periods of political collapse.

Hence we must postulate a *pulsating or oscillating relationship* between the sangha and the polity as being representative of traditional times. There was a direct link between the short-lived kingdoms that expanded and shrank and the growth, prosperity, and decline of monastic institutions.

Our thesis is that this pulsation was to change in nineteenth-century Thailand into linear cumulative relation, when the Chakkri kings established themselves in Bangkok and their kingdom steadily grew larger, stronger, and more centralized, with political authority being exercised more effectively than ever before in Thai history. Correspondingly, the sangha too attained a centralization and hierarchization hitherto unknown, though we should be careful not to overestimate the relevance of this process for and its impact on the multitude of provincial wat in their day-to-day existence.

The Impact of Colonialism: Linear Change and Political Stabilization

The story of Thailand's economic and political development and transformation in the nineteenth century is reasonably well documented,[6] and I shall merely set up certain signposts to mark that process.

Compared with other southern and Southeast Asian principalities – located in Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and so on – the impact of colonialism on Thailand was double edged in a special way. On the one hand, although not directly colonized, the Thai economy came to have most of the features of a colonial economy – in that its industrial development was poor, while export in agricultural products (especially rice and teak) and minerals (tin) provided the bulk of the revenue. The simple statistic that even today 80 percent of the population are engaged in agricultural pursuits is eloquent. It is still a society composed for the most part of farming peasants.

On the other hand, the colonial impact – though indirect – did result in a marked expansion of the economy, especially in rice production for export, which provided the financial fuel for the program of administrative overhauling initiated by King Chulalongkorn in the 1890s. The Bowring Treaty negotiated in 1855 with Great Britain is one of the decisive turning points in Thai history in that although an enforced free trade meant the immediate loss of royal customs dues and other revenues stemming from state regulation of trade, in the long run it was a stimulus to expansion in production, imports, and trade (with the Chinese especially playing an important role in the commercial sector). The vast unexploited arable lands were "colonized" by an intensification and extensification of agriculture. Ultimately then, through the application of new kinds of fiscal policy and taxation measures, the monarchy had access to economic resources on a scale previously unknown with which to sustain a new centrally controlled bureaucracy with centrally dispensed salaries and to undertake programs of modernization.

Now, before we depict in broad brush strokes the story of the nineteenth-century changes, we must save ourselves from one error of perspective and range. It is not usually adequately appreciated that, despite the extent of the kingdom on paper, it was for most of the nineteenth century constituted on much the same lines as the traditional galactic polity we have outlined for Ayutthaya. Vickery, in an informative essay (1970) tells us that Rama I's revised code of 1805 repeated the galactic structure of vassal states, great cities (*mahanakhon*), graded provinces, and so on, already contained in the Ayutthayan codes,[7] which we have described earlier, that

[6] For economic change, especially since 1850, see Ingram (1954); administrative reform and centralization are documented, among others, by Vella (1955), Riggs (1969), Siffin (1966), Wilson (1962), Wyatt (1969), Rabibhadana (1969), Tej Bunnag (1968), Moffat (1961), Griswold (1961), Vickery (1970).

[7] The Palatine Law and the Law on Military and Provincial Ranks.

the main principles of this classification obtained until Damrong's local administrative reforms, and that at the end of the nineteenth century hereditary succession to the governorships was clearly the norm in many first-, second-, third-class provinces (and even in some of the fourth-class ones to which, in theory, governors were appointed from the capital every three years).[8] In other words, let alone the so-called vassal states, in most provinces rule was by hereditary governors or rulers (*chao muang*) enjoying relative autonomy and replicated the courts and officialdom of the center. Importantly, even a number of the inner fourth-class provinces that traditionally formed the royal domain were governed by hereditary families.

We shall later examine the impact of Damrong's local governmental reforms on the hereditary provincial rulers and the change of the galactic polity to a radial type. Here let us first appreciate the fact that many of the actions of the first Chakkri kings to be described had for their scope the princes and nobles in the inner regions of the kingdom rather than the periphery, though no doubt laws and codes were formulated on an all-kingdom basis.

Let us begin with how expansion in the agricultural sector was accompanied by a gradual change in the traditional politico-economic relations between the princes (*chao*) and the office-holding nobles (*khunnang* or *nai*) on the one side and the freemen-commoners (*phrai*) and slaves (*that*) on the other, the latter being the personal dependents and retainers and laborers of the former.

Since the foundation of the Chakkri dynasty the traditional master-servant relation was slowly transformed by an interesting chain of measures. Long before the Bowring Treaty of 1855 the first three Chakkri kings had begun a greater annexation of revenue and power than was accomplished by their predecessors. Both Rama I and II had begun to earn a large part of their revenues from foreign trade, the king (and some of the princes and nobles) either directly participating in it or later selling monopolies to trading interests (Rabibhadana 1969, pp. 141 ff.) "During this period, the country was gradually opened up for foreign trade. Trade agreements were made with the Portuguese in 1818, with the East India Company in 1826, and with the United States in 1833" (p. 140).

The first Chakkri kings attempted to make inroads into the power of provincial governors and princes by weakening the latter's control of manpower. Rama I is said to have deprived the governors of *muang* (towns/provinces) the power to appoint their subordinate officials. An index of royal political strength is that from the reign of Rama II to the end of Mongkut's rule no serious conflict between the king and the *upparat* (second king) took place. The Chakkri kings sought to keep their own royal commoners (*phrai luang*) and slaves by requiring them to perform corvée or pay a sum of money in commutation. Sometime during this

[8] For example, the inner provinces of Chonburi, Samut Songkhram, Ratburi, and Phetburi.

period there originated the practice whereby on the death of a prince or noble all his dependents (*phrai som*) became the king's men (*phrai luang*).

This loosening up of the personal relations of dependents on princes and nobles and turning them into the king's subjects reached its peak with the influx into the country of an alternative supply of labor in the form of Chinese immigrants, who could be engaged on royal irrigation and other projects on a wage basis. Their availability made possible the reduction of corvée service and the encouragement of the commoners to commute their service into cash payments. By 1872 the time was opportune for the abolition of slavery as well; thus the traditional forms of manpower control and exploitation were superseded by more viable ones. Nevertheless, the ranked social categories of princes (*chao*), nobles (*khunnang/nai*), and commoners were to persist and remain important in Thai society, as did the institution of patron-client and leader-follower relations on an informal basis.

Thus the third quarter of the nineteenth century saw an expansion of the agricultural and commercial frontiers accompanied by a loosening of the traditional basis of manpower control, though the earlier Chakkri kings had taken the first steps toward encouraging trade and revamping the system of tax collection. For example, Rama III improved the royal revenues by farming out tax collection to tax farmers (mostly Chinese), thereby also cutting down on the number of official-intermediaries, who in the traditional system had creamed off part of the collection as it traveled from the peripheries to the center.[9]

But the road to effective gathering and wielding of power was not a bed of roses. The early Chakkri kings could subordinate the princes (whose competition for power contributed greatly to the fall of Ayutthaya) only by allying themselves with the noble families whom they promoted and succored as their *krom* officials. By the end of Rama III's reign, the power of the nobles was being felt as a threat. It is well known to what extent King Mongkut felt hamstrung by the power of noble families with which royalty was intimately connected through marriage and concubinage, especially the Bunnak family.[10] It was sometime before King Chulalongkorn could free himself from these nobles, and when he did, he was to, by a turn of the wheel of history, rely closely on royal princes to carry out an ambitious program of centralization of power and administrative reform. This

[9] Again it was this same king who for military reasons had the Saen Saeb Canal built in the late 1840s by Chinese labor (from Bangkok to Bang Pakhong River), which also led to some agricultural development in the central plain. Ministers of state and victorious generals were granted lands along the canal by an appreciative king; they in turn settled on these new lands prisoners of war (presumably granted by the king as their own slaves). And the minor canals and natural creeks feeding the main canal were developed by migrants and squatters (Hanks 1972, Ch. 5).

[10] The family providing the royal family with the mother of a king is called *rachinikun*. The Bunnak, Bang Chang, and Singhaseni families – who as we shall see shortly ruled the inner provinces – not only provided these women but also made first-cousin marriages in the latter half of the nineteenth century (Wyatt 1968).

alliance of king and princes finally produced its dialectic in the 1932 revolution, which signaled that the attempted modernization had done part of its work of producing a new category of officials and professionals drawn from the stratum of commoners with whom power had to be shared; if not, power denied would result in the clipping of the wings of monarchy and royalty, which was what happened.

But before this twentieth-century chapter had opened, there was the whole Chulalongkorn era that preceded it with its magnificent achievements whose heroes were, besides the king, his own royal siblings. It is indeed a remarkable phenomenon that the colonial threat was not only withstood in Siam by such a royalist minority but rarer indeed that the same minority creatively initiated its country into the compelling tasks of the twentieth century, when not to have modernised in certain respects would have meant colonial conquest and bondage. The ever-present challenge of the British and the French in Siam's adjacent territories lent an urgency in the 1890s to the administrative reforms of King Chulalongkorn and Prince Damrong, which had as one of their major purposes the preservation of the country's territorial integrity and claims. The times were the finest hour for a small royalist aristocracy whose legitimacy was ascribed but whose trophies were achieved.

Chulalongkorn's administrative reforms are described by one writer as having achieved "the functionalization of bureaucracy" (Riggs 1967). In terms of our representation of the galactic polity, its transformation can be envisaged as having two dimensions: (1) The central administrative ordering in terms of bipartitions and a repetitive involution that produced among other things a replication of tasks and fragmentation of authority was sought to be changed to produce functionally specialized ministries and departments. (Whether the traditional propensity was altogether eradicated is a different matter.) (2) The loose relation between the center (and its domain) and the satellites and provincial principalities ruled by *chao muang* had to be tightened and substituted by a centrally controlled and allocated regional and provincial salaried officialdom.

It is precisely these two transformations that Chulalongkorn and his princely ministers and a number of foreign advisers – British, French, Danish, and American – largely attempted and succeeded in achieving in good measure (Siffin 1966; Riggs). The colonial threat was met by exploiting the knowledge, machinery, and personnel of the Western imperial powers.

Although the king had already launched his program of forming new central administrative units in 1875,[11] the breakthrough, followed by an

[11] In 1875 the Revenues Development Office was established, which began the work of unifying tax collection and consolidating revenue that was largely realized in 1892 with the formation of the Ministry of Finance. The following statement tells us a great deal about the administrative involution of the traditional polity: ". . . according to a report compiled in 1872 some ten different *krom* shared in the collection of the main taxes, most of which were farmed out to Chinese agents" (Riggs 1967, p. 116).

intensified reorganization, is said to have begun in 1892. The spearhead of the reorganization was the new Ministry of Interior under the direction of Prince Damrong. Chulalongkorn urged Damrong (who previously was much engaged in educational reform) to take over the formation and direction of this ministry because it was critical in meeting the invasion threat of the imperial powers, in that all the outlying provinces were under its control. Apart from its serving as the agent for bringing the provinces under the control of the center, the Ministry of Interior also served as the model of a functionally specialized bureaucratic organization that incubated a number of new departments that in due course, after gaining strength, were transferred to another ministry of specialized function.

As Riggs has indicated, the Interior Ministry combined the territorial administrative functions hitherto performed, under the organizational chart of the traditional polity, "by the two great chambers of the left and right, the *Mahadthai* and *Kalahom*, and one of the 'four chambers,' the *Krom Klang*," which had, formally speaking, responsibilities for the provinces of the north, the south, and the gulf areas of the east (p. 117).

The Forest Department and the Mines Department, which were important in negotiating and regulating the commercial agreements with foreign lumbering and mining companies (which had previously made their own agreements with the provincial rulers, e.g., the ruler of Chiangmai and the European teak firms), had their effective existence within the Ministry of Interior and helped in the political process of centralization and establishing national territorial claims.

The Interior Ministry's aggregating and unifying tasks were matched by other ministries: Thus the Ministry of Finance consolidated all the revenue functions hitherto distributed among many chambers; similarly, the military and judicial functions likewise dispersed in several chambers were consolidated into the Ministries of Defense and Justice.

The most critical effort of Damrong was the creation of a network of officials. The hierarchy began with the Senabodi at the capital, followed next by the high commissioners of regions (*monthon*) formed by combining provinces, then the provincial governors, and concluding with the district officers at the *amphur* level, charged with the task of territorial and local government administration (*tesaphiban*).[12] Damrong effectively used

Other departments formed between 1875 and 1892 were the Royal Telegraph Department (1875), the Department of Survey (1881), the Department of Foreign Relations (1885), and the Department of Public Instruction (1887).

For my summary account of the great administrative reforms under Chulalongkorn, I have primarily used Riggs (1967), although elsewhere in other chapters the contributions of other writers are abundantly evident.

12 The concept of *monthon* already existed, in the form of five *monthon* in the northern, northeastern borders and in Phuket – but they were created for defense on tax collection purposes. Damrong's *monthon* were devised to draw tight the reins of control over the provinces by means of the royal commissioners who would coordinate the administration of the member provinces and report directly to the Interior Ministry. As one would expect, Damrong began with the inner provinces: In 1894 were created

his commissioners and district officers to curb and draw the old-type provincial governors into a national framework without actually displacing them. The older functions of the relatively autonomous provincial governors – judicial, revenue collection, and police duties – were disaggregated and entrusted to officers sent out by the Ministries of Justice and Finance and by the police department within the Ministry of Interior. And progressively specialized field officers (irrigation, forestry, fisheries, agriculture, rice, etc.) of various levels were placed within the provincial territorial grid manned by the generalist administrative officials of the Interior Ministry placed in charge of the district and provincial headquarters.

Here let us pause and take a closer look at the impact of the local administrative reforms on the traditional galactic territorial arrangement of the polity and devolution of power among traditional ruling families in the satellite provinces. The inspection of this issue will tell us some profound truths as to the kind of polity that emerged and the pattern of its distinctive achievements as well as imbalances that would continue to characterize Thailand into contemporary times.

As mentioned earlier, right through the nineteenth century many of the provinces continued to be administered by governors drawn from traditional local ruling families. Vickery (1970) provides us with examples for the northeastern, southern, and gulf provinces.[13] It was primarily during the

the first three *monthon* of Phitsanulok, Prachinburi, and Nakhon Rachasima. Gradually, the territories in the charge of the triple ministries – Mahatthai, Kalahom and Khlang – were taken over. By 1915, at the conclusion of Damrong's tenure, 20 *monthon* had been created throughout the country. In later years some of the *monthon* territory was conceded to France and Britain; other *monthon* were abolished or discarded. The remainder of 14 was abolished in 1933.

Incidentally, *monthon* is the Thai form for *mandala*, and it is not without significance that outer regions or "ring" provinces were called *monthon* in earlier times, and continue their label under the new administrative framework.

[13] Some examples are:

Northeast: Ubon was exceptional in that possibly because it was a critical border province it was placed under a royal commissioner for defense before the Damrong reforms; Surin's line of local governors terminated in 1907, Nakhon Phanom's finally in 1903 (when a Bangkok appointee took over); Sakhon Nakhon in the nineteenth century was ruled by family of trans-Mekhong origin until probably 1892, when a royal commissioner was transferred there; Mahasarakham's ruling family was related to that of Roi Et – the last of the line died in 1913 and was replaced by a member of Bangkok royalty. Nakhon Rachasima is importantly different in that after probably the Chao Anu rebellion (1826–1828) it was promoted to first class and its rulership placed in the hands of the Singhaseni family (descendants of Chao Phraya Bodin, who defeated Chao Anu and destroyed Vientiane), whose origins go back to Ayutthaya.

South: The origins of some of the southern ruling families of the nineteenth century were startlingly different from the northeastern – namely, Chinese and/or entrepreneurial-commercial. Examples are Phuket, Songkla, Ranong. In Songkla the first of the line was a Chinese tax farmer appointed by Taksin, and this hereditary position held by eight descendants ended in 1904. In contrast Narathiwat and Pattani were ruled by hereditary Malay rulers, and for them a special *monthon* status was given, and these rulers conserved their position as late as 1940. Nakhon Srithammarat was of course the prime southern province, ruled by hereditary families.

Gulf: These are the inner fourth-class provinces, for instance, Chonburi, Samut Song-

decades from 1890 to 1910 that a number of these ruling families lost their governorships and were replaced by royal commissioners, governors, and other officials appointed from Bangkok. But this transition affected the ruling families of diverse regions *differently*, and this is the first impact of the Damrong reforms we must examine.

The ruling families of the northeast provinces were the hardest hit. Vickery's review showed some 11 provinces or districts "with traditions of local ruling families going back to the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century and lasting until the period of administrative reforms, at which time they were replaced by Central Thai Officials" (pp. 869–870). It would appear that "the elites of the Northeast are conspicuous by their apparently total exclusion from high office under the reformed system" (p. 878): None of them was appointed a *monthon* royal commissioner; a few of the old hereditary governors were maintained in office for a certain number of years after the introduction of the reformed administrative system; and many others of the elite were either given lower-level posts or virtually demoted to the status of district officers or unsalaried positions called *krom kam phiset*.

By comparison some of the gulf-region families achieved notable success in being incorporated into the new bureaucracy: ". . . the Bunnags were most successful in weathering the change. Although losing family control of the gulf provinces and some of the important ministries, eight of them held positions of *monthon* Royal Commissioner and they have remained at the highest levels of Thai society up to the present" (p. 877). Another example is the Aphaivong family, which ruled at Battambang.

Among the southern provincial rulers too "there appears to have been a disproportionate incidence of success in moving from local hereditary elite status to the central appointive bureaucracy" (p. 878): One of the Na Nakhon family of Nakhon Srithammarat became *monthon* royal commissioner in 1913, the Na Ranong family held two royal commissionerships and two governorships; they as well as the Na Songkla family have acquired and maintained high status and prestige at the national level.

It is clear that the by and large nonintegration of the northeastern old families in Bangkok's pool of patrimonial agents is intimately linked with a second feature of the Damrong reforms – the division of the provinces into areas of direct and indirect rule (following British colonial practice in Burma and Malaya but also concordant in the traditional polity with the category of vassal/tributary kingdoms as opposed to provinces under direct

khram, Ratburi, and Phetburi provinces mentioned earlier. In Chonburi the governorship was held by the Thummanon family until 1904; Samut Songkhram was first ruled by the Na Bang Chang family (descended from a sister of Rama I's first wife) and then replaced by the Bunnak family until 1917. In Ratburi the Vongsarot family held the governorship from the time of Taksin until 1897; in Phetburi two members of the Bunnak family held the governorship from 1858 to 1913. One of them, Thet, was appointed royal commissioner for *monthon* Ratburi when it was established in 1894, while he was serving as governor.

control). A notable feature is the recognition of the old vassal states of the north as *monthon* Phayap in 1900 with its capital at Chiangmai: A system of dual authority distributed among the traditional rulers and royal commissioners was maintained, but the force of circumstances and political considerations soon robbed the local rulers of their power, and by 1906 the normal *monthon* system replaced indirect rule. Similarly, the seven Islamic provinces were in due course grouped as *monthon* Pattani and enjoyed indirect rule (which respected Islamic customary law and traditional administrative practices) under the supervision of a special royal commissioner until 1906. The old rulers were thereafter slowly phased out.

Although indirect rule was short-lived (and these above-border regions still pose certain problems for Bangkok), it is conspicuous that the northeastern provinces whose ruling families were old, by tradition linked to the left bank of the Mekhong and enjoying in oscillating rhythm either tributary vassal status to Bangkok or some Laotian overlord, were subject to direct rule when their credentials were as good as those of the northern families mentioned earlier. Obviously, many political and cultural considerations dictated Bangkok's policy: A major one may have been the French presence across the Mekhong and the anxiety over the conservatism, isolation, and, more importantly, loyalty of the northeastern regions precisely because of their strong Laotian connections and their linguistic and cultural variations from central Thai. Damrong's tendentious stand in relation to the northeast is revealing: He pronounced the people to be Thai and not Lao, did not grant a distinctiveness to their tongue except as a brogue, and preferred to call them Thai Lan Chang.

We have dwelt at some length on the questions of the manner of Bangkok's integrating the provinces and their traditional ruling families, because, while by no means ignoring the achievments of the provincial administrative reform, we want to make clear that what we have labeled the radial polity took its distinctive shape from the degree of success with which the local autonomies of the traditional polity were dealt with, the local ruling interests incorporated and converted to a national conception, and the regional centers linked to the metropolis.

Our evaluation is that the linear cumulative changes that reached their climax particularly during the period when Damrong implemented the local governmental (*tesaphiban*) reforms (1893–1915) converted the traditional galactic polity not into a full centralized bureaucratic polity, but rather into what I call a *radial polity* with conspicuous patrimonial-bureaucratic features. One meaning of "radial" is the characteristic of having spokes of lines extending from a center, and what I want to convey by using this analogy is the idea that whereas the structural emphasis in the galactic polity was on satellites revolving around a center whose shape and structure they replicate on a lesser scale, in the radial polity the emphasis is on a swollen metropolis trying to control the provinces through its agents and, conversely, on all provincial roads leading to the capital.

The radial polity thus is politically not a fully effective polycentric, integrated, interlocking entity; rather, it is unbalanced: the center attempting too big a controlling function of its outlying parts and in turn acting as too forceful a magnet for certain provincial segments; the center not tolerating other centers and not adequately devolving on outlying regions effective powers nor incorporating them in a fully participating political process. Concretely, we have in mind the farther regions of the northeast, the extreme Muslim south and the extreme tribal north as examples of failure in incorporation on the part of the Bangkok-controlled polity, while of course achievements were positive in the inner regions. On the whole, the old ruling, princely families of the north – Chiangmai, Lampang, Lamphun and Nan – persist to this day; they too cannot be said to have played a prominent part in Bangkok court and ruling circles. Thus, in a sense, this legacy of the Chulalongkorn radial regime has continued largely to contemporary times and illuminates the kinds of occurrences familiar to us: the control of government being decided by frequent coups staged in Bangkok as well as the possible alienation of certain far provinces.

All this is taken into account, yet the evidence is clear that Chulalongkorn and Damrong had to a considerable degree transformed the archaic polity "by superimposing on it an apparatus of centrally appointed and rotated officials, responsive to the capital and capable of enforcing new rules in the territories to which they would be appointed" (Riggs 1967, p. 135). The transformation that took place in the nineteenth century can be summed up as follows:

Under the colonial impact there was a cumulative linear change to a new patrimonial-bureaucratic type of state, articulated from the capital, which had at hand an expanded pool of resources and increased possibilities for the mobilization of people for public works. The era of Mongkut and more so of Chulalongkorn was one of limited modernization combined with an increasing absolutism in the exercise of power. Correspondingly, never before did the ceremonies surrounding kingship reach such an elaboration in Thailand as in this era; but then never before had the kings exercised so much real and effective power as in this era. An intriguing issue, therefore, which we tackle elsewhere in the Appendix to Chapter 11, is the shape that kingship assumed in this unique era of progressive modernization combined with growing centralization of power.

Here let us return to the question of the impact that increasing political centralization, territorial unification, and modernization had on the sangha, its organizational structure and its practices. The impact, to anticipate the detailed presentation, was two stranded.

Both in the time of Chulalongkorn's administrative transformation and in the subsequent decades of the twentieth century there have been periodic purifications of the sangha and its regulation on diverse fronts. Secondly, there has also been an accompanying intensified process of instituting a hierarchical and politically regulated system of ecclesiastical

administration. From the events of the latter half of Chulalongkorn's reign and the recent decades of this century, we shall learn lessons that substantiate more fully those we tentatively inferred from our knowledge of the more remote past. One is that purification and regulation of the sangha are recurrent acts that are as much linked with political necessities as they are with religious zeal. The purification not only helps inaugurate and legitimate a new king (as it did, for instance, with Rama I), but it also may be related to other objectives that stem from the political realm. A second lesson is that while purification measures seek a sanction in the past in the Malinowskian sense of charter ("this is what the ruler ought to do following hallowed custom"), they also smuggle in innovations that do not have precedents in the pristine past but that are nevertheless justified in its name. Thus we realize that the past as sanction does not exclude innovation, because innovation itself is presented as embodying the aims and spirit of the primordial model.

11. The Nineteenth Century Achievements of Religion and Sangha

Converse with any educated scholar-monk in Bangkok or the provincial centers and he is likely to tell you that the wat played an important educational role in the past, a role that has diminished in the past 70 to 80 years because of the impact of Western civilization on Thailand and the consequent increasing modernization and urbanization. The more vocal and ambitious monks would say that it is time that the sangha recaptured its old role; but they will also concede that the traditional monastic education is in many ways outmoded and needs to be restructured. But this restructuring itself presents dilemmas and doubts. On the one hand, scholar-monks moan the decreasing interest of novices and monks in continuing with traditional Pali studies as such beyond a certain point. Since the minimum Pali qualification required to enter an ecclesiastical university is *parian prayog* 4, many young monks or novices do not feel the need to carry their Pali studies further. As a result, many traditionally famous monastic centers of education have had to contract their teaching of Pali at higher levels and to concentrate on the lower levels only (*prayog* 3–6).[1] At the same time, together with a diminution of interest in higher Pali studies goes an interest in acquiring modern secular knowledge on the part of novices and monks, so that they can keep up with the times and so that, it is claimed, they can play a more vital and relevant role in modern society. It is also realized that only such an expansion of education to incorporate new content and methods will ensure that the number of religious recruits (for whom government-sponsored secular education becomes more easily available) will not seriously diminish. But again there is the possible countereffect that affording secular knowledge to novices and monks is to aggravate the chances of their disrobing when they have completed their education. This then is the modern crisis in monastic education in Thailand, and we shall inquire how the ecclesiastical authorities and concerned scholar-monks are trying to cope with it.

[1] Thus, for example, Wat Thongnopakun, located in Thonburi, in the fifties and early sixties ran a school that not only taught novices and monks up to *prayog* 9 but also instructed many pupils who came from other wat. Today only the novices and monks who reside in Wat Thong attend the school, and there are no students studying beyond *prayog* 6. A similar fate has overtaken many other traditional *paryattitham* schools run by individual wat.

From a historical point of view, we are in this chapter primarily concerned with the educational activities of wat – from the time of the latter half of King Chulalongkorn's reign. We choose this watershed, because it was during this period that two developments took place that have vital implications for current orientations within the sangha: The first was the active mobilization of wat as agents for imparting primary education in the 1890s, and the second, which occurred concurrently, was the bringing together into closer relation the sangha and the secular administrative system, which finally culminated in the devising of an ecclesiastical hierarchy in 1902 more elaborate than anything that had existed previously.

But before we come to this vital period, let us review the alleged traditional contributions of wat to the education of laity as well as religious personnel. It is difficult to form a realistic picture of monastic education in the past, especially since certain chauvinists and sentimentalists not only in Thailand but also in Ceylon and Burma tend to make inflated claims about the glories of monastic education from "times immemorial," a claim that is often matched on the other side by some Christian missionaries' belittling of the enlightening role of Buddhism in traditional society.

Traditional Education

One may surmise that in the past kingdoms of Sukhodaya and Ayutthaya knowledge was probably transmitted by two kinds of agents. One was the small circle of court brahmans who introduced certain aspects of Hindu learning, such as the Vedas but more importantly the classical Indian treatises on law (*dharmashastra*), arts, sciences, astrology, and so on. The court scribes and judges and teachers of royal ritual and statecraft were probably of brahmanical origin and descent. But note that they were a minority, confined primarily to the king's court and provincial capitals, and that they were an exclusive group that could not have had a direct servicing role for the public at large, only an indirect one by holding up to its eyes a "theatrical" vision of a divine monarch and his rule in this world.

The most conspicuous feature of Buddhism regarding the recruitment of religious personnel – at least in Thailand and Burma – and the imparting to them of religious sacred knowledge is its antithetical posture vis-à-vis brahman exclusiveness.[2] It recruited persons as monks or novices from any social position, commoner or noble (but not slave), subject to certain admission criteria that are recited at ordination.[3] Since Buddhism was the religion of the masses, it had relatively open traffic with them. Not least in this traffic was the Buddhist version of discipleship – usually described in

[2] As is well known, in Ceylon *goyigama* caste status was an exclusive criterion of recruitment in the established Siyam *nikaya*; it is only from the beginning of the nineteenth century that other castes have been able to form their own fraternities of monks.

[3] These relate to being of human status, nonsubjection to certain diseases, not being a fugitive from the law or being a slave, securing parental permission, and so on.

concepts such as *sitwat* and *luksit* – the widespread manifestation of which was the sending of young boys (and, less frequently, girls) to the monasteries to learn elementary dhamma and reading, writing, and arithmetic. This is a fundamental feature of traditional popular primary education reported from Ceylon, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia as well.

The educational system during the Ayutthaya period appears to have been as follows. Van Vliet (Van Ravenswaay 1910) described virtually a three-stream system: The third and highest stream consisted of young temple boys (*dekwat*) who were taught the fundamentals and later became novices; the first and lowest stream of pupils received little education and left early to participate in agriculture, crafts, and trade into which occupations their parents initiated them; the second stream consisted of youths who were more highly educated than the preceding, with a view to their filling public administrative positions. Thus it was the third stream that contained the most highly educated ecclesiastics who would continue in their religious status to become abbots of wat, ecclesiastical office-holders, and the like.[4]

Wyatt cites Prince Damrong as saying that ordination as a novice was the second phase of education and that boys, including princes, entered it to acquire specialized knowledge as well as religious training. Monkhood itself was intended for those who wished to spend their entire lives in the sangha. "The custom of two ordinations, as novice and as monk," Damrong wrote, "is modern, and dates from the end of the Ayudhya period."[5]

It appears then – to return to the Ayutthayan era – that the education of monks and novices for whom the religious vocation was to be a long-standing if not a permanent one was the most specialized and advanced level. "The laws of the time indicate that formal measures long had been taken to encourage monastic education and scholarship, for ranks and

[4] Van Vliet, who was in charge of the Dutch East India Company's interests in Siam from 1629 to 1634, gives the following account of the education of children (which is virtually identical with Joost Schouten's account relating to the 1630s as cited by Wyatt 1969, p. 10):

Till their fifth or sixth year the children are allowed to run about the house; then they are sent to the priests to learn to write and read and to acquire other useful arts. Those who serve the priests in public worship go very seldom home. When they can read and write properly they are sent to learn a trade or to take up some other employment. Frequently, however, the cleverest of them are allowed to pursue their studies, on account of the greater talent which they display. Instruction, secular as well as religious, is given solely by the priests, till they are qualified to fill public positions and offices. They then discard their yellow robes, but many intelligent and talented pupils remain in the monasteries, in order to become Heads of temples and schools, or Priests (Joost Schouten, *Siam 250 Years Ago: A Description of the Kingdom of Siam, Written in 1636* [Bangkok, 1889], p. 15).

[5] This pattern of two ordinations is certainly older in Burma and Ceylon. We have already seen in previous chapters how this old system operates even today in northern Thailand. A further transformation of the situation described by Damrong in Thailand in later times is the phenomenon of young men missing novicehood altogether and only undergoing a temporary three-month monkhood as a rite of passage, having already acquired secondary, vocational, or higher education elsewhere in secular institutions.

positions were given to the most learned of the monks, and government-sponsored ecclesiastical examinations were introduced during the reign of King Narai (1657–88)" (Wyatt 1969, p. 9).

De La Loubère (1969)[6] attests to the fact that in Ayutthayan times state-regulated ecclesiastical examinations were periodically held, and Van Vliet informs us that the chiefs of temples were at that time chosen from the most learned priests (Van Ravenswaay p. 77). De La Loubère (p. 115) gives an interesting reason as to why examinations were held: He says that monks were beneficiaries of privileges among which is exemption from "the six months' service (i.e., corvée) and that "to diminish the number of these privileged persons, he [the king] causes them to be from time to time examined as to their knowledge, which respects the *Balie* Language and its Books: and when we arrived in this Country, he had just reduc'd several Thousands to the Secular condition, because they had not been found learned enough." [7] We are told that the examiner was a secular official, Louang Souracac (Luang Sorasakdi) by name (though according to another tradition he was called Chao Phya Vijayendr).[8] Practically the same information is provided by ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, the secretary to Shah Sulaiman's embassy to King Narai: He reported that study was imposed on the monks in order to dissuade the lazy who might find in monkhood a refuge from royal service.[9] We clearly recognize King Narai's action as an instance of the purification of the sangha, in this instance executed to ensure adequate standards of learning among the monks.

It appears that three *parian* degrees were granted in the late Ayutthayan period: the third grade for proficient translation of (portions of) the *Suttanta Pitaka,* the second grade similarly with respect to the *Vinaya Pitaka,* and the first grade with respect to the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* as well as the other two "baskets." Prince Damrong described pretty much the same system of three grades as being in effect in King Rama I's reign.[10]

[6] Also see Van Ravenswaay (1910).

[7] Van Vliet (Van Ravenswaay, p. 76) says that Ayutthaya had 20,000 ecclesiastics, and he surmised that the number in the whole country was four times as much. While we cannot rely on these figures, yet it is clear that the number of monks and novices in Ayutthayan times must have been great. According to Van Vliet, then, within the capital of Ayutthaya were 4 principal temples and 400 "other beautiful temples which are adorned with many gilded towers and pyramids" (p. 73).

[8] See *Buddhist Education in Thailand* (1961).

[9] This snippet of information runs as follows:

> Since the kingdom of Siam is not of great extent and whoever becomes a monk deserts the peasantry and enters the temple there are not many people who actually work. Therefore, the king has ordained that whoever resides in the temple and wishes to be excused from the responsibilities of everyday life must do several years of study. If the candidate really applies himself to his studies, fine and good, but if this is not the case, if his only purpose is tranquil seclusion and a life of ease, he is not left to such dreaming but is forced back into the ranks of the peasantry. Once his name is inscribed in their registry, the revenue agents exact the taxes from him as from anyone else (O'Kane 1972, p. 120).

[10] In his letter to Prince Narisranuvattivongse (B.E. 2490) quoted in *Buddhist Education in Thailand,* pp. 67–68.

It was in the reign of Rama II that the supreme patriarch divided Pali studies into nine stages, a system that has continued into modern times.

It is clear from the evidence relating to the late Ayutthayan and early Bangkok periods that the holding of religious examinations for monks "was an affair of state, being included in the functions of a king as the upholder of the Faith" (Van Ravenswaay, p. 82). They were held by royal command, the ecclesiastical officials being helped in the arrangements by court officials. In the reigns of Rama I and II the examinations were held irregularly, partly because of the pressure of other tasks on the court and partly in order to keep pace with the building up of a sufficient number of candidates.

Perhaps the next important landmark in the development of monastic education was during the reign of Rama III (1824–1851) in the Bangkok period, when religious examinations began to be held annually. While no doubt earlier kings of the Chakkri dynasty were concerned with ecclesiastical affairs – Rama I, for example, formulated new regulations for the sangha (*Kot Phra Song*) and sponsored a new edition of the *Tripitaka* – it was later, particularly in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, that in an atmosphere of political stability the Western impact (particularly that of the missionaries) helped to generate dynamic changes within the sangha, particularly under the leadership of the princely monk who later became King Mongkut.

It was during Rama III's reign that the twin cities of Bangkok and Thonburi literally took on that aspect one associates with the capitals of magnificent Buddhist monarchs of olden times. The building and renovation of temples was done on a scale that not only imitated but perhaps surpassed that achieved in the temple-studded capitol of Ayutthaya, which now lay in ruins farther up the river Chao Phraya.

While during the third reign more attention apparently was given to repairing and embellishing existing palaces rather than constructing new ones – yet some 17 palaces were constructed outside the 2 main palace areas during the reign, 15 by the king and two by the *uparat* – it was otherwise with temples and monasteries. Vella's enumeration makes one realize with a gasp how many of the capital's famous temples of today owe their architectural and artistic splendors to the religious enthusiasm of this king:

> The king not only supported temple construction directly but also, according to the chronicle of the reign, "led princes, officials, and wealthy people to make merit by building temples." Altogether, nine new *wat* (Siamese temple compounds) were built, five by the king and four by other members of the royalty and nobles, and sixty *wat* were repaired or expanded, thirty-five by the king and twenty-five by others, during the reign. Princes and nobles who gave their *wat* to the crown – for a *wat*, although dedicated to general use, was considered the personal possession of the person who financed its building – were given financial support in meeting construction expenses. Among the important *wat* constructed

during the reign were Wat Threpthida, Wat Ratchanatda, Wat Chaloemphrakiat, Wat Bowonniwet, Wat Bowonsathan, Wat Prayurawong, and Wat Kanlayanamit. Important additions were made to other *wat*, including Wat Pho (also called Wat Prachetuphon), Wat Suthat, Wap Liap (also called Wat Ratchaburana), Wat Saket, Wat Arun, and Wat Yannawa.

Outstanding examples of all types of Siamese religious architecture were constructed during the Third Reign. The types of buildings found in *wat* include the *bot*, the hall for ordination of priests; the *wihan* (or vihara), the hall for preaching; the stupa, a monument originally erected for religious relics; the *mondop*, a library for Buddhist texts; the *sala*, a resthouse; the belfry; and the gallery.

The *bot* and *wihan*, practically identical in form, were most commonly rectangular buildings with tiered pitched roofs of colored tile, solid walls of limed stucco, and rows of columns outside the walls to support the roofs. Among the fine *bot* built during the reign were the one in Wat Suthat, which was built on conventional lines; the one in Wat Bowonniwet, the floor plan of which is T-shaped; and that in Wat Bowonsathan, which has the form of a blunt cross. Fine *wihan*, all of conventional design, were constructed in Wat Pho, Wat Saket, and Wat Kanlayanamit. The *wihan* in Wat Kanlayanamit was distinguished for the great height of its roof; it is still the tallest building of its type in the Bangkok area.

Some of the outstanding stupas in Bangkok today were built during the Third Reign. Siamese stupas are of two main types: the *chedi*, which is usually bell-shaped with a slender spire, and the *phraprang*, which is an attenuated version of the Cambodian tower. Numerous *chedi* were built during the reign. Perhaps the two most famous are those in Wat Pho erected as memorials to the reigns of Rama I and Rama II. Both of these *chedi* are basically square in shape rather than round; this was the most popular stupa shape during the period. The former is covered with white tiles, the latter with yellow. It was the *phraprang*, however, that reached its artistic peak of development during the Third Reign. The magnificent central *phraprang* at Wat Arun – the tallest and most imposing religious building in the Bangkok area today – was built during the Third Reign. The temple was begun by Rama II, but Rama III replaced the 52-foot central *phraprang* put up by his predecessor by a tower 227 feet tall. Other imposing and graceful *phraprang* were built during the reign, although no other has the monumental proportions of the one at Wat Arun. The *phraprang* at Wat Liap is particularly noteworthy (Vella 1957, pp. 46–47).

The most outstanding monument to and a repository of knowledge and learning of the early and mid-nineteenth century is to be found in one of Bangkok's most remarkable wat, Wat Phra Jetubon (Chettuphon) (popularly called Wat Pho). Prince Dhani has meticulously documented for us the contents of the inscriptions in the wat, inscriptions that the described as having "the nature of an encyclopaedia," the whole temple-complex itself being a "University in Stone" (Dhani Nivat 1969).

The monastery itself was old, and is believed to have existed from Ayutthayan times. Its extensive reconstruction and restoration was undertaken by the Chakkri dynasty, the first effort being completed in 1802 by Rama I, and the second carried through from 1835 to 1848 by Rama III.

It was to this second effort that we owe the bulk of the inscriptions, embodying many branches of knowledge extant at that time and encyclopaedic in scope. Our chief interest here is to give some idea of the kinds of information and knowledge inscribed in writing. I leave aside not only the buildings, statues, and bas reliefs but also the paintings that themselves illustrated Buddhist doctrine and cosmology, incidents from the great *Ramakirti* epic, popular fables, and myths.[11] The inscriptions contain:

1. Names of the territorial divisions of the kingdom, arranged according to their geographical situation, and the names of governors of some provinces.
2. Illustrations of the technicalities of Siamese poetic art, for example, the four main categories of poetry – the *klong*, the *khon*, the *kabya*, and the *chanda* – which range from the literary to the lyrical and more popular modes.
3. Explanations of paintings depicting birth stories of the Buddha (*Jataka* tales).
4. Codification of medical knowledge, constituting a medical library (written, it is said, by the court physician and dealing with the treatment of smallpox, techniques of massage, childbirth and pediatrics, pharmacopeia, etc.).
5. Citations of contemporary moralist literature (e.g., *Krishna Son Nong*, etc.); also the "verses of worldly wisdom" (*Klong Lokaniti*).
6. Brief verses on the topics of astrology and omens.
7. Verses elucidating the statues representing various ethnic groups and nationalities – Siamese, Sinhalese, Karen, African, Dutch, French, Arab, Japanese, Turk, Chinese, and so on. The Dutch, for example, were described this way: "The farang figure here represents a seafaring nationality, strong and unshakable in their faith of Jesus Christ, who they believe created the world. . . ."
8. Descriptions of paintings of the nine Buddhist councils (this was the chief work executed in the library itself).
9. Elucidations accompanying the painted story of the New Year *Songkrant* ceremony, together with folk tales, popular myths, and accounts concerning it.

All these inscriptions were written or engraved in the cloisters, the multitude of pavilions, and the library. There is no doubt at all that Wat Jetubon was meant to be a storehouse of all kinds of knowledge available at the time. The enumeration I have given shows that the inscriptions are not merely devoted to matters of Buddhist doctrine and mythology but span many branches of knowledge from the technicalities of poetry to the diversity of ethnic groups and nationalities, from matters of political administration to the practice of medicine and astrology.

What we do not know accurately is how unique Wat Jetubon was for its time. Certainly, the famous wat of Bangkok and Thonburi and the provincial towns, while rich in paintings and architectural achievements, do not by any means contain this massive density of inscriptions especially relating to secular knowledge. But we certainly do know of the existence up to this day, not only in large or famous monasteries but even in the mean-

[11] As Prince Dhani puts it: ". . . not by inscriptions and paintings alone was the encyclopaedic nature of the ensemble emphasized but also by other decorations and embellishments such as architecture and gardening" (p. 28).

est wat in remote areas, of collections of manuscripts stored away in libraries (*mondob*), boxlike buildings standing on stilts, sometimes intricately lacquered and painted with gold panels. These palm-leaf manuscripts and books actually frequently relate to many of the topics to which the Wat Jetubon inscriptions refer.

In an essay dealing with the role of the wat as a repository of different kinds of written texts and as a transmitter of literacy in a relatively remote northeastern village (Tambiah 1970), I showed from a cursory examination of the wat's decaying and now neglected library that it contained not only Buddhist texts and sermons in the local sacred Tham script but also texts relating to rituals (which are usually not performed by monks), medicine, astrology, proverbs, local myths and folktales, and so on. I demonstrated that one of the most important functions of the wat was not only to confer literacy on novices and monks but to give them access to areas of knowledge – medical, astrological, ritual – which these literates could exploit after they had disrobed and entered lay society. Furthermore, not only were texts stored in the wat, but it was the monks and novices who themselves copied them for their own subsequent use as laymen.

There is no doubt that the same situation must have prevailed in wat in the rest of the country, at least in the immediate past. What I described for a norheastern village I found largely to be true of a village I knew intimately in the north in the Chiangmai region. Of the earlier Lanna Thai period in the history of northern Thailand a Thai writer says that the northern wat not only taught Buddhist scriptures but also subjects such as "traditional medicine, construction, astrology, magic and the art of self defence" (Chongkol 1970). We ought to bear in mind that the wat of different regions were the preservers and agents of transmission of regional languages, scripts, and literature. Just as in the northeast in the Udorn region, for example, until quite recently novices were taught the sacred Tham script, the secular Lao script, and increasingly also the Thai script, so also in the north the dialect script of Thai Yüan was taught in addition to the more nationally dominant one. And just as the wat preserved regional cultural identity, they were also the vehicles for transmitting the nationally dominant and centralizing Thai language, thereby serving at the same time to promote a certain amount of national integration.

Let me digress for a moment here to say that it should by no means surprise us that, historically, Buddhist monasteries have been places of learning in India, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and elsewhere. By the fifth century A.D. it had become established in Ceylon that the study of books (*ganthadhura*) is the more valued occupation of monks rather than *vipassanadhura* (meditation). (See Rahula 1956, pp. 158–160; Tambiah 1970, pp. 66–67.) It would be a long digression, indeed, if one were to document the historical role of monks as commentators, historians, poets, writers, and experts in the occult-mathematical arts in Buddhist countries. Here I

shall briefly remind the reader of Dutt's account of the transition made by Buddhism in India from the "study for faith" to the "study for knowledge," especially after the successful brahmanical revival that eroded away Buddhist influence. Buddhist monasteries became less propagators of religion and more the developers of "one aspect of the monastic life that was rooted in their ancient tradition of monk-scholarship" (Dutt 1962, p. 321). This monastic reorientation meant the outgrowing of a cloistered, involuted life to a more liberal and many-sided one. The change from the classical conception in the *Majjhima Nikaya* (No. 115 – *Bahu-dhatuka Sutta*) that a monk's education is complete when "he has mastered the whole of the canonical lore and grasped the fundamental doctrines and basic ideas on which the practice of the Dhamma rests" to the new conception stated by Bu-ston represents the story of how the contemplative life often became immersed in the systematization of thought: "Accordingly the science of Logic (*Heturidya*) and of Grammar and Literature are studied in order to vanquish one's adversaries (in controversy); the science of Medicine (*Cikitsavidya*) and Arts (*Silpakarma vidya*), for administering help to others, and that of Metaphysics (*Adhyatmavidya*) to acquire knowledge of himself" (Dutt, pp. 322–323). Dutt describes these disciplines as traditionally grouped as the five *vidyas: sabavidya* (grammar and philology), *cikitsavidya* (medicine), *hetuvidya* (logic), *adhyattmavidya* (metaphysics), and *silpasthanavidya* (fine arts). The mastery of these was considered to equip a monk well for the spread of religion to the laity and for victory in disputations.

Let us return to Thailand and attempt a sober assessment of the situation there. Judging from nineteenth-century and present-day conditions we can probably make two plausible statements: The monasteries essentially produced a minority of literate specialists who serviced the country at large, while their role as dispensers of elementary education had little to do with the learning and knowledge we have enumerated previously. But we should at the same time take account of one important achievement: Before the spread of state-sponsored education in Thailand the monasteries not only trained sons of nobility as novices for a limited period of time to fill public positions but, perhaps equally importantly, made accessible diverse kinds of knowledge other than strictly religious to monks who spent a long time in robes (from novicehood to ordained monk), which they were able to put to good use when they disrobed.

But in mid-nineteenth century Thailand a reform movement occurred that had the twofold effect of intensifying the learning of, and interest in, the canonical texts, thereby producing true scholar-monks and at the same time devaluing and indeed attacking a wide range of traditional fields of knowledge relating to ritual, astrology, medicine, folklore, and so on. In other words, we face here the consequences of scripturalism and reformism that desire to return from an alleged corrupt state to the pure pristine doctrine and practice of canonical Buddhism.

We must consider the essential features of this reform movement be-

cause it significantly affected the course of monastic learning and monastic involvement with public education in Thailand. Its effects continue to this day.

Prince Mongkut's career as a monk is adequately documented elsewhere and does not require detailed repetition here.[12] Ordained as a monk in 1824 at Wat Mahathat, he chose to remain in robes when he had been outmaneuvered for the throne by his elder, less eligible, half-brother. He took up residence at Wat Samorai (now Wat Rajadhiwat), situated some distance from the capital and which was famous for the teaching of meditation and spiritual exercises rather than for the inculcation of learning; he was disenchanted with this training because his teachers could not provide him with the doctrinal and canonical explanations for the practices they taught. He returned to Wat Mahathat to study the canonical texts. He later found the key to correct Buddhism in Mon Buddhism and returned to Wat Samorai to forge and practice the new discipline undisturbed. Finally, having proved himself a scholar, an able ecclesiastical examiner, a reformer, and a propagator, he was appointed abbot of Wat Bowonniwet in 1836, which became the center for the activities of what in King Chulalongkorn's reign was formally recognized as the Dhammayuttika (Thammayut) sect, and given autonomous status as one of the four components within the sangha. When Rama III died in 1851, Mongkut left the sangha to mount the throne and become one of Thailand's ablest kings.

The movement of Mongkut's career seems to provide an excellent statement of two deeply entrenched paradigmatic themes in the Buddhist polity of Thailand (and elsewhere):

1. When Prince Mongkut declared his dissatisfaction with the way of life of the *arannavasi* (forest-dwelling) monks of Wat Samorai, he in fact reiterated an old issue and resolved it in the classical manner of institutionalized Buddhism when he declared that meditation and ascetic practices (*vispassaradhura*) uninformed by learning (*ganthadhura*) were of little value.[13] In fact, Mongkut's reform movement was a dynamic expression of Buddhism that took its inspiration from the knowledge of texts and that was dedicated to taking the true religion to the people as good *gramavasi* (town-dwelling) monks should ideally do.[14]

2. The second theme embedded in Mongkut's career, expressed at an

[12] The following, based on Siamese sources, give informative accounts of King Mongkut's career as a monk: Lingat (1926, 1931, 1933); Vella (1957); Griswold (1957); Moffat (1961); C. Reynolds (1972).

[13] Apropos this F. K. Lehman (personal communication) makes the interesting comparative comment that in Burma meditation is usually linked with *abhidhamma* study, while in Thailand meditation is often linked with the search for supernormal powers. With this orientation goes the general neglect of *abhidhamma* studies and concentration upon the study of *Vinaya* and *Sutta Pitaka* in Thailand.

[14] While *vipassana* is often associated with forest-dwelling monks, it is inaccurate to view the forest-dwelling and village-dwelling distinction as fully concordant with the division between study and praxis. The relations are variable, and in later chapters I shall refer to the practice and propagation of meditation in urban monasteries.

elevated princely level, is constantly reiterated at lower levels of society in Thailand. Mongkut as prince, at the very beginning of his married life (he already had two children), in a manner similar to Prince Siddhartha, renounced the royal life to become a "homeless wanderer." But from here there is a departure from the Buddha's life: after 27 years in robes, which Mongkut spent very actively learning about and reforming his religion, he made a second renunciation, to leave the sangha and to assume what was under the circumstances the more elevated position of king. In certain respects, this biography finds its echo in that of many village youths who join the order and leave it several years later with achievements and acquisitions which they can put to positive use in lay society.

But from these generalities let us return to some of the details of Mongkut's activities. There is no doubt that Mongkut soon discovered that the sangha of the time was in many ways flabby, easygoing, unwilling to reform abuses and introduce more rigorous practices. Apart from cases of individual immorality, some *vinaya* rules of conduct were being ignored, and probably the *patimokkha* recitations, an important activity of a community of monks (*sangha kamma*), were being irregularly observed.[15]

> The aim of the reform movement, in essence, was to expunge from Siamese Buddhism all that was not in accordance with the Hinayana canon. The aim was carried out in a number of ways: by reforming monastic discipline and changing details in ritual; by defining and purifying the canon; and lastly, by changing the very spirit of Siamese Buddhism as a religion. (Vella 1957, p. 39).

Within Theravada Buddhism, sectarianism, when it occurs, is frequently concerned with details of discipline and ritual rather than doctrine. The accent is on correct practice, which is synonymous with correct observance of the *vinaya*. In championing some Mon monastic practices in preference to the Thai forms on grounds of orthodoxy, Mongkut was following a well-trodden path. One of his preoccupations was the procedures for correct installation of *sima* and the creation of sacred space within which valid religious activities could take place;[16] another was the correct procedure for the ordination ritual. Mongkut's movement, which took the label of *dhammayuttika*, meaning "those adhering to the law," also advocated the Mon way of wearing robes[17] and holding the bowl. His other disciplinary changes included the correct method of receiving robes and garments at

[15] Lingat (1931, p. 20) writes of the state of the sangha: "Little attention was paid to the few rites prescribed by the Buddha to the assembly of his disciples. The meetings in the communities were no more held periodically but depended on the will of the abbots."

[16] Mongkut had ordination take place in a sacred space represented by a raft moored to the river bank. This method, called *dalhikamma*, was adopted because the raft on water was space untarnished by private property rights.

[17] This style involves the covering of both shoulders, adapted apparently to conform to a Pali textual reference that monks should not remove the outer shawl when entering a building. There is no prescribed style that can be attributed to the Buddha. In Thailand, it is generally said that Mongkut introduced the Mon style of wearing the

the *kathin* ceremony, correct pronounciation of the Pali language in order to bring out the difference between aspirated and unaspirated voice stops, and the fixing of the *uposatha* day according to the real phases of the moon (rather than according to the calendar).

The obsession with orthodoxy in details of practice is really part and parcel of the preoccupation with the separation of the true canon from its impure adhesions.[18] It is this concern with finding the true canon, of understanding the truth correctly and discarding false beliefs and magical practices, a concern that may be described as *scripturalism*, that powered vital developments in Thai Buddhism. Lingat has written eloquently of Mongkut's objectives:

> Even more perhaps than evasions, he Mongkut hated mechanical performances which transform devotion into nonsensical ritual. He expected the Bhikkhu to understand the prayers and Pali formulae that he was to recite, the reason for the rules to which he was subjected, and the meaning of the acts that were demanded of him. Thorough knowledge of the canonical books, which had been the starting point of, and the justification for the reform, should be the first care of him who puts on the Yellow Robe (1933, p. 80).

But one cannot avoid risking a comment about a scripturalism that seeks to establish pure pristine practices that in fact cannot be unambiguously textually confirmed. Thus this search too becomes a kind of ritualistic technology and perhaps can be more fully understood only by our appreciation that the search for and compliance with the true original procedure are intrinsically related, in the actor's perception, to the achievement of religious purity and merit. In this sense scripturalism produces its own form of ritualism.

The concrete measures Mongkut adopted in promoting this scripturalism can be listed:

1. As one charged with the organization and conduct of ecclesiastical examinations, he raised their level and, thereby, the general standard of religious education. The prince (now abbot of Wat Bowonniwet) and his disciples, all able Pali scholars, devoted themselves to teaching the sacred language and turning out an increasing number of candidates for the examinations that conferred degrees.

2. He founded a press for printing and popularizing Pali works. (There already were two presses in the capital owned by American missions, which used to turn out Christian propaganda tracts.) "The press, the first founded by a Siamese, published the Patimokkha. . . , some selections of prayers,

robes; in actual fact it appears that the controversy over covering one or both shoulders is old and cuts across the distinction between Burman and Mon orders.

[18] The label *dhammayuttika* implied the renouncing of all practices that had no other authority than traditional use, and the accepting of such regulations only as were found in the canon (Lingat 1933, p. 77). But like all reformers who search for the pristine religion, many of the new practices introduced had no better foundation in early practice or canonical regulations than the ones replaced.

and some teaching books, which rapidly spread in the Dhammayuttika communities, and greatly facilitated study" (Lingat 1933, p. 81).[19]

3. Perhaps Mongkut's most important undertaking was to establish the pure Pali canon, because the extant Thai collections of the *Tripitaka* were judged both defective and incomplete. It is in respect of this venture that Sinhalese Buddhism figures importantly. Intensified communication with Ceylon resulted in the sending of two embassies of Siamese monks in 1840 and 1843 to bring from Ceylon 40 volumes and another 30 volumes respectively of the *Tripitaka,* the Sinhalese versions in Pali being considered purer than any other. A major consequence of the study of Sinhalese and Mon texts was the generation of "an unprecedented textual work" which lasted till the end of the reign of Rama III (1851). A good index of the vitality and dynamism of a religious revival and revitalization is the amount of textual criticism and commentaries that it produces. It could be said that Thailand after the lapse of many decades was witnessing the reawakening of scholarship and intellectual interests among its monastic population.

4. The search for the pure canon inevitably involves a puritanical cleaning of the stables and the removal of impurities. A puritanical intellectualism is inevitably hostile to what it considers unfounded myths, fantastic cosmologies, and superstitious beliefs. Mongkut did not merely condemn superstitions and scoff at certain ritualistic excrescences;

> he did not hesitate also to reject from the canon as "apocryphal," legendary stories like the Jataka, though so popular in Siam, or to see in them but pious fables framed for the edification of children or of the multitude. He explained the supernatural powers attributed to the Buddha by the development of faculties natural to all men. The miraculous events in the life of the Buddha or of the Saints were in the same way accepted as parables or reduced to human measures (Lingat, p. 84).

Here we see expressed a euhemeristic viewpoint. Mongkut went further and rejected the entire *Traiphum* (*Three Worlds*), that famous and vast cosmological work written in 1345 by a prince who later became king of Sukhodaya and which, besides cosmology, contained moral dissertations and a model of kingship conforming to Buddhist ideal.

To the terms "scripturalism," "intellectualism," "euhemerism," we may add "rationalism" as still another component of Mongkut's reformist movement. This rationalism is in many ways a response to the impact of Western ideas received in the form of a curious combination of science, technology, and the theology of the missionaries. Rama III's reign felt the pressures from the West, particularly the United States and Britain, to sign treaties of trade.[20] Perhaps an even more important impact resulted from the establishment of the permanent Christian missions: The first Protestant mission-

[19] Printing was first done in *ariyaka* characters composed by Mongkut after the Roman characters; but this innovation was not a success, and later printing was in Siamese characters.

[20] Treaties were signed in 1826 and 1833 with Britain and the United States.

aries came in 1828, and by the end of the king's reign three Protestant missionary organizations (the American Baptist Missionary Union, the American Presbyterian Mission, and the American Missionary Association) were active in Siam. Although the Catholics were first in the field in the seventeenth century, they did not have a continuous presence, and it was not until 1830 that the Catholic mission was "revitalised and expanded" and "began operating on a permanent basis."[21]

It is well known that the missionary presence has acted as an irritant and has produced a counterresponse in the world religions of Southeast Asian countries. In Ceylon and Burma the missionaries, aided by the disestablishment of Buddhism and governmental support of their schools, enjoyed the monopoly of education for a time, printed religious tracts, conducted propaganda sometimes in bad taste and in open contempt of the "heathen" religion and its alleged irrational, false beliefs and practices. We also know that Christian proselytism conducted on these lines usually produced four responses in the recipient society: It acted as an irritant, spurring on the elite indigenous adherents and ideologists of religion to reform their "gross" practices and to champion a scripturalist and rationalist religion alleged to be already revealed in the ancient texts; it evoked a counterattack on the irrationalities and superstitions of the Christian faith itself; it was the source of organizational forms, printing techniques, and propaganda devices, which were assiduously and ardently imitated by the indigenous opposition, and, finally, it demonstrated the importance of spreading literacy and educating the masses if religion is to prosper.

"The Protestant missionaries [in Siam] were active in many fields. They preached, translated religious tracts and portions of the Bible into Siamese, printed and distributed their translations, practised medicine, and conducted schools" (Vella, p. 36). Although the missionary presence was relatively small, the missionaries in general enjoyed royal favor and tolerance, except toward the end of Rama III's reign. But they enjoyed the friendship and keen interest of Mongkut, the princely monk, thirsting for Western knowledge and languages while at the same time being secure in his belief in the superiority of the Buddhist religion. Mongkut's search for a Buddhism that would stand up to the canons of rationality of the West was to some measure a result of his contact with the Europeans.

Prince Mongkut was one of the first Siamese open to Western ideas. During his second sojourn at Wat Samorai, he had entered into relations with great French Bishop, Mgr. Pallegoix, whose parish was next to his monastery. He taught him Pali and received Latin lessons in exchange. At Wat Pavaraniveca [Bowonniwet] he made acquaintance with the American missionaries recently arrived in Bangkok, and more intimately with the Rev. Jesse Caswell, Rev. D. B. Bradley and

[21] It is relevant to know how large the missionary presence was. As regards the Protestant missions, their numbers fluctuated, but by 1850 there were about 10 missionaries. The Catholic mission had by 1849 a bishop, eight European priests, and some nuns (Vella 1957, pp. 35–36).

Dr. S. Reynolds House. In 1845 he took up the study of English and succeeded in speaking it fluently. His relations with the representatives of Western civilization did not alter his faith in Buddhism, but they no doubt helped him to realise how absurd Buddhism, as practised in Siam, appeared to scientific minds, and urged him to emphasize the rationalistic character of the reform which he had undertaken (Lingat 1933, p. 84).

Now it is true that the missionaries saw falsehoods and malpractices in popular Buddhism; it is equally true that Mongkut saw the need for purifying religion and to reconcile the dhamma and modern science.[22] But it is strange that Lingat himself should also naïvely subscribe to the view that to "scientific minds" certain features of extant Buddhism were "absurd," for we are better able to appreciate now that the basic ideas represented by the written word in philosophical works are often expressed in a different idiom, or metaphorical language in cosmologies and myths, and again at still another level in the expressive and instrumental aspects of ritual action (Tambiah 1970). Rationalistic scripturalism frequently is in danger of impoverishing the very religion it seeks to enrich and of narrowing the multiple communication media that religion and ritual exploit to the more restrictive use of the canonical "book," the "written word," and its recitation.

Mongkut's word-emphasizing reformation manifests still another feature that though it looks contradictory is once again common to revitalizing movements. While discarding impure works, beliefs, and rituals, Mongkut also introduced new forms of worship. He composed many Pali chants and formulas for daily worship, which are still in use today.[23] He caused the festival of *Maha Bucha* to be observed in Thailand for the first time, devising the rules and procedures of observance himself. He also devised a special service for the annual celebration of *Wisakha Bucha* (which ap-

[22] Griswold gives an example of Mongkut's reconciling mind at work.

> Mongkut felt that . . . no conflict existed between the Doctrine or Law and modern science. He did not reject the belief in transmigration, but he gave it a more philosophic interpretation. He could point to the laws of physics to show that given causes produce given effects. If these laws govern the material universe, was it not reasonable to assume that similar ones govern the moral domain, so that every deed, whether good or evil, is inevitably followed by its appropriate consequence, either in this life or the future? Though there was no "soul" to be reborn, the "energy of action" was everlasting. Such conceptions were hard for simple people to grasp; and to them, if they had any doubts about transmigration, he gave the simple answer that Buddha himself had given: "If you are not sure, you had better be on the safe side. If you believe in it, you will lead a good life, gain the respect of all, and lose nothing even if it turns out you have guessed wrong. But if you reject it, you will very likely follow your own evil desires; and in this case if it turns out you have guessed wrong you will be like a traveller without provisions" (1957, p. 18).

[23] See Wells (1960) for examples of King Mongkut's Pali compositions (e.g., the *Dvada Patimokkhadi Patha* composed for the *Maha Bucha* festival [p. 78]), which are included in the Royal Book of Chants. Wells documents exhaustively Mongkut's reforms and innovations (pp. 12–14).

parently was first begun in the reign of Rama II). The popularization of these festivals in Thailand is largely due to him. He injected a new efficacy and power into sermons by exhorting monks not to read set written pieces but to preach directly, using Pali stanzas as the themes; he also increased the number of sermons delivered at Wat Bowonniwet to two on each *uposatha* day, besides their delivery at festivals and special occasions. Needless to say, Mongkut himself was endowed with great oratorical talent. All these features are elements in a new *activism* whereby religion was not merely to be confined to the monastic libraries and cloisters but should be actively propagated and taken to the people.

We have now considered the various strands in the Buddhist reformation that Mongkut initiated in the first half of the nineteenth century. We should also try to assess what its impact was on Thai society and religion as a whole.

First, let us note the number of wat involved in the Thammayut movement. Apart from Wat Bowonniwet (which, during Mongkut's last years there, had 130 to 150 monks) there were by 1851 five other wat that had become centers of Thammayut teaching. Wat Samorai had already become important as Mongkut's monastery of residence for the crucial seven years during which he laid the groundwork for the movement. Others newly founded were Wat Paramanivasa, Vijaynati, Puppharama, and Khruavan; the first was founded by Mongkut, the rest by members of the nobility who held high official positions (these were the officials who in due course would back Mongkut as the successor to Rama III).[24] In the first years of occupation of the throne King Mongkut was to found four new Thammayut monasteries: Wat Somanassa (1853), Padumavana (1857), Rajapratistha (1864), and Makutaksatriya. Their abbots and other monks holding positions of management were all chosen from the best monks from the central wat, Bowonniwet. Again, at the beginning of the next king's (Chulalongkorn's) reign two more Thammayut wat were founded, namely, Rajapavitra (1870) and Devacircindra (1878).

This throws light on the political aspect of the Thammayut movement. Begun by a prince, it took root in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Thailand, which was a hierarchical society with "absolute" kingship and privileged royalty, intimately linked with a powerful nobility. Innovations, whether political, administrative, or religious, had their origins in high places, especially among the princes. Once Mongkut ascended the throne, the Thammayut's backing in the capital among the powerful was assured. Mongkut's able abbot successors at Wat Bowonniwet were two princes: Pavaret and Wachirayan. All the sons of King Mongkut were ordained at this wat as novices or monks, including the future king Chulalongkorn; also during this time were ordained two Cambodian princes, the future

[24] See Lingat (1933), p. 887, for their identity.

kings Norodom and Sisowat.[25] (And to carry the story still further, Kings Vajiravudh, Prajadhipok, and the present King Bhumipon have continued the tradition in this century.)

The Thammayut sect thus had its base in the capital (though subsequently it had its representatives in the provinces), a base that was narrow but powerful socially and politically. And unlike the loosely related and independently founded wat of the established Mahanikai sect, the Thammayut sect had a leader and his disciples, located in one or two principal wat, who either founded new branch wat or provided the chosen personnel for new wat founded on their behalf by royalty and nobility. Although this organizational unity was loosened in the last years of the declining Prince Pavaret's long abbotship of Wat Bowonniwet (1851–1892),[26] his able and illustrious successor Prince Wachirayan pulled all the Thammayut wat together, making them conform to one uniform rule under his guidance given from his position as abbot of the central wat. We could say that in comparison with the Mahanikai sect's decentralized structure of autonomous and therefore loosely related constituent wat, differentiated as being of royal or commoner status, the Thammayut organization was remarkable for its attempted uniformity and tightness.

The Thammayut sect's energies, though temporarily flagging in the 1880s and early 1890s, were whipped up to a new level of achievement under Mongkut's third successor to the abbotship of Wat Bowonniwet (1892), Wachirayan, son of King Mongkut himself, head of the Thammayut sect, continuator of his father's work and eventually becoming *sangharaja* in 1910.

Wachirayan's achievements were many and significant for the future of the sangha. Besides tightening up the organization of the Thammayut sect, he launched reforms concerning the systematic administration of the wat and its bookkeeping; more importantly, he overhauled the education of monks and novices and their system of examinations and spearheaded what is perhaps the most important activity vis-à-vis the society at large that the sangha in Thailand had ever attempted. It is to these last two aspects that we should now turn; but before we do so, let me place Mongkut's reform movement in a wider perspective, for instance, by comparing it with contemporaneous events in Ceylon.

Mongkut's reform movement was not unique when compared with events that took place about the same time in other countries of Theravada Buddhism. I shall take as my example Ceylon, where in the course of the nineteenth century, particularly in the latter half, took place a Buddhist revival

[25] It is also worth noting that princes who were not eligible for cremation in the Pramane grounds were cremated at Wat Bowonniwet, which was situated just outside its precincts.

[26] For example, Wat Somanassa and Wat Makutaksatriya had enacted regulations of their own and had begun to open up branches. The membership of Wat Bowonniwet during Prince Pavaret's declining years had diminished to some 30 monks around 1880.

that had many of the characteristic features of the movement in Thailand. But the political, social, economic setting and implications of the revival in Ceylon are very different from Mongkut's movements for the following reasons:

First, the traditional Kandyan kingdom with which was associated the established sangha named as Siyam *nikaya* [fraternity] (because the ordination of monks was revived in mid-eighteenth century with Siamese help) was conquered by the British in 1815. From then onward started its decline, especially with the gradual withdrawal of British governmental protection of the sangha's interests, and the disestablishment of the Buddhist religion, completed around 1847. We should also note that the established Siyam *nikaya*'s recruitment of monks and novices was restricted solely to the dominant and highest *goyigama* caste.[27]

Second, the revival in Ceylon is closely associated with the economic and social changes resulting from colonial activities. The locus of political and economic power moved to the low country (the southwestern coastal region). Castes traditionally rated as lower than the *goyigama* (farmers) – the *salagama* (cinnamon peelers), *karava* (fishermen), and *durava* ("toddy tappers") – amassed new wealth and with it experienced social mobility by participating in commerce, in arrack renting, in servicing the coffee plantations being opened up by the British, and subsequently by themselves engaging in opening up coconut and coffee plantations. This is the underlying basis for the formation – especially in the first decade of the nineteenth century – of new Buddhist fraternities, which found their legitimation in Burma rather than Siam and which really recruited their monks from the non-*goyigama* castes. They were loosely organized as the Amarapura sect, internally divided into smaller caste-based fraternities.[28] In this respect

[27] Certain factors may help to explain this principle of recruitment. First, in a caste-stratified society the lower castes are in some degree unfree, just as slaves are totally unfree compared with freemen (and were excluded from ordination in early Buddhism). Second, insofar as the Buddha himself was a "royal" person who became a renouncer, and royal symbols have been elaborated with regard to his characterization, so has the sangha in turn been accorded certain forms of "royal" etiquette. Hence it is understandable how an institution so close to kingship should in certain circumstances favor the highborn. The Thammayut in Thailand in particular manifested a special attraction for royal and aristocratic sons. And being close to kingship it showed a predilection for promoting the objectives and aims of kingship.

[28] Later there was a low-country-based segmentation within the Siyam *nikaya* called the Kelaniya fraternity; and in 1864 was formed another reform-aspiring non-caste-based Ramanna sect.

We should take note that just as the newly emergent Amarapura fraternities in Ceylon copied a Mon-Burmese model (as regards ordination procedure, mode of wearing the robe, etc.), so did Mongkut take a similar model for his reformist sect. In the early 1840s, during the time Siamese monks brought over texts from Ceylon, Mongkut was in correspondence with the older Siamese and the newer Burmese sects in Ceylon.

It has been pointed out to me (F. K. Lehman, personal communication) that in fact the Mon and Burmese traditions are not unitary but show variant practices and strands. Thus it is clear that the distribution in Ceylon between Siyam and Amarapura

there is a vital difference between the greater uniformity and tightness of the Thammayut sect in Thailand under the direction of undisputed heads like Mongkut and Wachirayan, and the looser structure of the Sinhalese Amarapura sect.

We thus see that the basis and impetus for the two Buddhist revivalist movements were quite different though they both attached themselves to the same Mon-Burmese variant tradition: In Thailand it was spearheaded from the very top by a royal prince and supported by a secure traditional hierarchical polity facing for the first time the challenge of the West; in Ceylon it was sponsored by new socially mobile groups that owed their new fortunes to colonial domination and exploitation and that were in opposition to the declining traditional establishment in religion and caste. In other words, the Sinhalese revivalism was, to simplify grossly, an aspect of the *kara-goi* contest.[29]

But the full maturity of the newly emergent educated and affluent groups did not begin to express their religious rivivalist tendencies and *militancy* until the 1860s and subsequently. We are tempted to call the Sinhala Buddhist movement a *revival* because it was an attempt to resuscitate a religion that had declined under British rule as a result of the colonial government's withdrawing support from Buddhism and its giving special privileges, especially in the sphere of education, to Christian missions. Because the missionary influence in Ceylon was that much more privileged, monopolistic, and also more viciously deprecatory in its propaganda than in Siam, the Sinhalese Buddhist reaction against the Christian missions was correspondingly more aggressive and militant. Thai Buddhism faced the missionaries with confidence, tolerance, and curiosity; Sinhalese Buddhism from a position of weakness with militancy and a sense of grievance. Thus in Ceylon we get the famous contests and disputations between educated Buddhist monks and evangelistic Christian missionaries on the relative merits of their religions – examples of which are the Baddegama Controversy (1865) and the Panadura Debate (1873). It was, of course, in the 1880s that the Buddhist revival came to a climax with the arrival of Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky and the formation of the Buddhist Theosophical Society, which, financed and supported essentially by the new low-country urban English-educated elite, engaged in activities that matched those of the missionaries. These were the establishment of a Sinhalese printing press and of Buddhist schools and the formation of vigorous Buddhist lay congregations and associations. If out of all this fervor and turmoil a notable personality emerged in Ceylon, it was a militant and devoted Buddhist called Anagarika Dharmapala, who manifested the dual aspects of a colonial

nikayas, and in Thailand between Mahanikai and Thammayut *nikayas*, is a meaningful internal contrast, which relates their disciplinary and ritual basis to alleged external sources that objectively do not provide unitary precedents.

[29] This is from the title of a book, *Kara-Goi Contest* by G. A. Dharmaratne Colombo (1890), which is concerned with the claims to supremacy of the *karava* and *goyigama* castes, the challenger and the title holder.

product – the rational puritanism of the missionaries interpreted in terms of Buddhism, which he combined with an intense hatred of the religion and culture of the Western rulers. There was even a third aspect to him – the representative and mouthpiece of a new low-country Sinhalese commercial class that called upon loyal Buddhists not to trade with Muslim and Tamil rivals. How different was this man from Mongkut; and how different indeed were the social and political contexts that bore and nourished them!

But despite all these differences, the expression of both movements in Ceylon and Thailand was similar – an accent on scripturalism (on practicing the true unadulterated religion as revealed by a close study of the canonical texts) combined with an activistic impulse to carry the religion to the masses. A part of the last mission was the establishment of better institutions of learning for monks as well as better schools for the public, schools that while imparting modern education would also inculcate Buddhist values.[30]

King Chulalongkorn's Experiment

The Thammayut *nikaya* prepared the ground in two ways for the remarkable role the sangha was called upon to play by King Chulalongkorn around the turn of the twentieth century: by its emphasis on scripturalism (i.e., the study and propagation of the pure canonical texts) and its exhortation that monks should enlighten the people as active teachers of Buddhism.

By the end of the year 1898 Chulalongkorn, stimulated and aided by two able princes, decided to promote widespread primary education in the provinces and to entrust the implementation of this program to the monks, under the leadership of Prince Wachirayan, abbot of Wat Bowonniwet and head of the Thammayut sect. The program was called "Plan for the Organization of Provincial Education," and Prince Wachirayan's appointment was described as "organizer of religion and education of the Buddhist population."

In dealing with this education development I can do no better than cite fragments from Wyatt's authoritative study (1969) of educational reforms in the reign of Chulalongkorn. The architects of the primary education program were Prince Damrong, who was minister of the interior, and Prince Wachirayan. The Interior Ministry would provide the funds and support services. One of the advantages of using monks as the agents for the spread of education was the low cost of the program (an argument that incidentally is used again, as we shall see later, in modern times with regard to the *thammathud* program).

The thrust of this new program came from the capital; and the primary agents were monks chosen from the Thammayut sect, which as we have seen exercised great influence in the capital among royalty and nobility.

[30] For Ceylon, I have in mind the formation of the Vidyodaya, Vidyalankara Pirivenas, and Buddhist schools such as Ananda, Nalanda, Visakha Vidyalaya, and so on.

These agents in the role of directors, inspectors, and teachers would be sent out from the capital to the provinces. At least one school established in each province with government funds would serve as a model for other schools supported by the people, which too were eligible for government funds as conditions allowed. Thus

> all monasteries will be made places of study. Wachirayan's whole strategy was founded on the belief that monastery schools, however low their quality, had to form the starting point for the spread of modern education in the provinces, and he was not given unlimited funds with which to provide them with materials and personnel to upgrade their standards. . . . From the Sangha's viewpoint it was certainly a wise political strategy. Once Wachirayan had introduced into the provincial monasteries up-to-date printed textbooks, examinations, and new teachers, it was up to the town and village monks themselves to decide whether to accept them or to resist . . . (Wyatt 1969, p. 255).

Our interest in this educational program implemented through the sangha can be put in the form of three questions:

1. What motives prompted Wachirayan as a monk-prince to champion the program backed by his brother-prince Damrong?
2. What were the positive educational achievements that can be attributed to the sangha?
3. What were the religious and political consequences of this educational experiment?

As for motivations and considerations, I reiterate the important point that the program under consideration was conceived in an aristocratic society with a powerful monarchy whose principal agents were princes committed to the royalist cause. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the basic objectives of Wachirayan and Damrong were conservative and preservative in the sense that they wished to promote the progress of the kingdom within the framework of a secure and strong Buddhist religion and monarchy.

But Wachirayan and other ambitious monks were also concerned with strengthening the position of the sangha and with expanding its role vis-à-vis society when they hitched the sangha to the national wagon of progress. Wachirayan wanted to dispel the idea that the monasteries had merely a religious function; education was also their natural role. And he advocated that the sponsorship of the educational program by the monasteries would rejuvenate religious activity and help improve the administration of the sangha. At one of the general meetings between the monk-directors of the program and officials of the Ministry of Public Instruction held in September 1899, one director, Phra Methathammarot, made a significant statement that sums up the objective: " 'The work which I have done so far' he said, 'leads me to conclude that education and religious affairs are one and the

same matter: each is dependent on the other . . .' " (Wyatt, p. 247). Over and above this, one also gets the impression that Wachirayan wished to demonstrate that the sangha was an entity in its own right, not a mere agency in the control of a government department.

Now let us briefly inquire into the actual educational achievement of the program. The two most important problems faced are the perennial ones: the provision of adequate textbooks and the training of teachers for service in the monastery schools. It must be conceded that Wachirayan and the Thammayut monks, especially those based in Wat Bowonniwet, made real achievements for a period of time. A textbook bureau was established at Wat Bowonniwet; of the textbooks produced, the *Rapid Reader* is said to have been an advancement over existing texts. The teacher-training program was perhaps more successful. The 12 provincial education directors, who were charged with the direction of both education and religion and who would visit, survey, report on and direct activities, were chosen with a keen eye to the needs of the situation: All 12 appointees were monks of high standing; all were distingushed graduates of the ecclesiastical examinations; moreover, they had family connections in and local knowledge of the provinces in which they were to work (Wyatt 1969, p. 238).[31] By the late nineties Wachirayan had found a way of producing teacher-monks fairly adequate to the task, considering the circumstances: Monks who had already acquired the Standard II qualification in government schools were used as teachers in the branch schools of the Mahamakut Academy, as well as to train other monks as teachers.

> In the strict sense of the word this was not teacher-training, for the education given the monks included no specifically pedagogical studies; but to the understaffed schools it was sufficient that these teacher-monks were instructed in a modern curriculum, covering the same material as Standards I and II of the syllabus of the Education Department [whose activities were mainly confined to the capital and not to the provinces]. This programme was sufficiently developed by 1899 for its examination system and schools to be able to compete for students with the schools of the Education Department, and for the Ministry of Justice to send its young law students to Wat Bovonniwet for their Thai examinations before embarking upon their legal studies (p. 242).

The education of the elite monks of the Thammayut sect progressed a step further when Wachirayan obtained permission for them to gain entrance to the normal school (a government school that trained teachers, using an English secondary curriculum), where they could have access to modern pedagogical training and where some could be trained as teachers of English. In 1899 apparently this practice was extended further when provisions were made for large increases in the numbers of monks brought

[31] We may also add that almost all (with a couple of exceptions) of the first group of 12 education directors chosen in 1899 were Thammayut in affiliation.

from the provinces for the specific purpose of being trained as teachers (p. 242).

Three years after the initiation of the program Wachirayan submitted his final report, which listed the following achievements:

177 new schools had been founded in the first year's operations, to which were added an additional 154 by 1901, while the number of students attending the new schools jumped from 790 in 1898 to 6,183 in 1899/1900 and 12,062 in 1900/01. For the most part, these schools were staffed by resident monks, but the directors had also chosen thirty-eight provincial monks and novices for teacher training in Bangkok during the period (p. 253).

The distribution of the textbook *Rapid Reader* exceeded by twice the actual number of students in the government schools, which meant that many unrecognized schools were also using the reader. "In addition, in 1809/1900 the annual Mahamakut Academy examinations were held in the provinces and were taken by 988 students from the *monthon* Krungthep (Bangkok), Ayudhya, Nakhon Sawan and Chanthaburi, as well as an additional 71 from Ubon" (p. 154).[32]

But despite these successes Wachirayan threw in the sponge for the very good reason that he realized that the sangha could not act as a long-term agency for the propagation of country-wide secular elementary education. Wachirayan had begun by disagreeing with the Department of Public Instruction, which argued that only lay teachers could be the most efficient vehicles for imparting secular education; he had "staked the positions and prestige of his brother monks and himself on his belief that they would respond positively, and time was to prove him right; but time also reminded him that his was a temporary, catalytic role, and that the consummation of his policies ultimately must rest with professional educators and the Ministry of Public Instruction" (p. 255).

Dogged by an insufficiency of funds but, more importantly, appalled by the "bureaucratization of his programme" he sought to withdraw from the sangha's entanglement with the activities of the government.

Arguing that the provincial education directors, as monks, "by definition" had an insufficient knowledge of government and worldly practical affairs, and that government was much more stable and better organized than the Sangha, Wachirayan asked the King whether the Ministry of Public Instruction might simply take over the whole programme, appointing education commissioners in the provinces similar to the financial and judicial commissioners then being appointed by the Ministries of Finance and Justice (p. 250).

The king resisted but in the end gave in and took the burden from the sangha's shoulders.

[32] The overall failure rate was 45 percent, ranging from 23 percent at the lowest levels to 68 percent at the highest.

I have described this particular venture at some length, largely citing from Wyatt's work, because I feel that the pattern of its events has a great deal to teach us about the scope and possible success or failure of some of the present-day national development activities of the sangha in Thailand. From my point of view, however, the most important consequence and implication of Wachirayan's involvement of the sangha in the government's educational program was something he did not fully grasp while himself actively engaged in the process of creating it.

The implementation of an elementary education system in the provinces directed from Bangkok automatically demonstrated the need for a country-wide hierarchical ecclesiastical organization with lines of communication and authority. Moreover, the program inevitably necessitated the closer working of the monk-directors and teachers with the lay officials of the government at all levels. This, in turn, meant a closer relationship between the state and the sangha. And what better model for ecclesiastical organization can there be, spreading from the capital to the outer territories, but that of the civil administration itself. Indeed the monk-directors of the provinces also became the agents for the promotion of an ecclesiastical organization.

> Particularly in the remote areas where lines of contact between the Sangha and Bangkok were vague and non-existent and in which internal Sangha organization was poor, they assumed as part of their task the creation and building of local ecclesiastical hierarchies, appointing chaokhana ("Sangha chairman") at the district and province levels and in some cases acting as chaokhana monthon themselves (p. 245).

And we are not at all surprised when Wyatt reports that:

> The directors saw the necessity for a firm structuring of the Sangha from top to bottom, making ecclesiastical and civil jurisdictions coincide geographically as well at the subdistrict or commune (tambon) level as at the level of the monthon, thereby eliminating the older ecclesiastical hierarchy by which the Sangha was divided by sects (and even notional sects) without regard to geography. They wished to see all the monks in any locality grouped under a single chaokhana or "Sangha chairman," the chaokhana tambon to be responsible to the chaokhana amphoe, and so forth up to a national Sangha council. It seems clear that the absence of such clearly-defined lines of authority had hindered the direction in their work, and their attempts to eliminate this problem undertaken at this time formed the basis of the Royal Ordinance on the Governance of the Sangha of 1902, which was to serve as the basis of Sangha organization for the next sixty years (p. 247).

Thus at the turn of the century a firmer and more embracing ecclesiastical organization than had ever previously existed in Thailand, sponsored and supported by the state, was devised. What the monks perhaps did not appreciate was that the erection of this structure might also entail a greater subordination to and control by the political authority than had ever been

experienced before. We shall test this idea when we examine later in detail the contemporary ecclesiastical organization.

To my mind, there is a certain paradox in Prince Wachirayan's career as reformer and later head of the sangha. It is the paradox of a monk who was jealous of the sangha's independence of the polity and yet was enthusiastic as a royalist prince to lend the sangha's assistance to a national task. These dual orientations could be complementary but also fraught with problems, as he learned at least in one instance.

Thus when he accepted the brief for the sangha to propagate primary education in the provinces, he also wished to demonstrate at the same time that the sangha was an entity in its own right, not merely a subordinate creature in the control of a government department. Wachirayan's educational scheme "was the embodiment of his earlier warning given in 1898 not to let people think that the Sangha is under the control of the Ecclesiastical Department of the Ministry of Public Instruction" (Wyatt 1969, pp. 237–238). And Wachirayan insisted that orders sent to the education directors from the Ministry of Public Instruction be sent to him first for his approval, even if this procedure caused delays; and he had exchanges with the ministry that, although recognizing its authority to make ecclesiastical appointments, urged that he be formally informed beforehand. (C. Reynolds 1972, pp. 252, 261).

But Wachirayan could also in his national aspect remark in 1910, after Chulalongkorn's death, that monks provided a firm binding between the government and the populace. The least controversial interpretation of this remark would be that he evaluated Chulalongkorn's rule as being a just and benevolent government and that for such a polity the sangha and the *sasana* provided the cement that held the ruler and the ruled. And in the same autobiography where the quoted remark appeared, he made an eloquent observation on the fact that monks who are pillars of Buddhism are led to assume ecclesiastical tasks and accept titles from the state, that rank is a marker of religious virtue, and that the state's strength is necessary for the maintenance of the health of Buddhism (C. Reynolds, p. 209). Of this one can be sure: Wachirayan believed that the health of Buddhism required a nationally administered sangha and that the ecclesiastical machinery had to lean on the arm of the polity in order to be effective.

In documenting the educational activities and the experiments of the Wachirayan era we should also take into account Wachirayan's attempt to overhaul and upgrade monastic schools that were concerned with the education of monks and novices. And he forged a curriculum and a plan that is essentially followed up to the present day in monastic schools. Wachirayan started with the well-known fact that in Thailand there are two types of religious: those who join the order as novices or as young monks and wear the robes for a long stretch of time (the "regular monks" in my vocabulary) and those for whom ordination is a kind of rite of passage and

who are ordained as monks for a brief period to make merit for themselves and their parents ("temporary monks").

> The fruitful idea of Prince Vajranana [Wachirayan] was to divide the teaching given in his monastery [Bowonniwet] into two classes, corresponding to these two categories of bonzes. The newly-ordained Bhikkhus were then to receive from their preceptors lessons in Siamese, teaching them the Buddhist rules of morality, the main points of the doctrine and the principal events in the life of the Buddha; written exercises and periodical examinations kept up a proper emulation between the pupils. Those who desired to keep on wearing the Yellow Robe after their probation was satisfactorily finished, were admitted to the study of Pali and to the preparation for ecclesiastical degrees (Lingat 1932, p. 99).

This system, subsequently improved, was adopted by many non-Thammayut monasteries as well.

Wachirayan was also responsible for initiating in 1893 the first university for monks, Mahamakutrajavidyalaya. We have already referred to the role of this institution in Wachirayan's scheme for training teachers and in producing textbooks for the elementary education program. The Mahamakut Academy began at Wat Bowonniwet, and it soon had branches in the Thammayut wat. He endowed the academy with a library; and besides preparing school textbooks the prosperous publishing house printed a periodical containing model sermons for monks in the provinces. It is also of interest that it was during the same period that the first edition of the Siamese *Tripitaka* was completed (1893).

Important as the betterment and overhauling of religious education was, yet this system of education, valued and important as perhaps the purveyor of the highest forms of knowledge known at the time, was to seem within a few decades too narrow, specialized, and in some ways outmoded. When Thailand entered the twentieth century, the government soon was to sponsor a system of secular education and disseminate forms of knowledge outside the scope of traditional religious education in *pariyattitham* schools.

Appendix to Chapter 11. The Symbolization of Monarchy in the Nineteenth Century

In examining this issue I must engage with Riggs, with whose characterization of kingship in the nineteenth century I disagree in part. Riggs (1966) has phrased his account in terms of a transformation of Thailand from a traditional polity to the modern phenomenon of bureaucratic polity. Now I do not deny this transformation, but I want to insist that an account of a simple linear transformation without awareness of the continuities that persist and help shape the new amalgam is less than complete and less than accurate. Just as in the domain

of contemporary politics I wish to emphasize this point that a transformation need not imply a discontinuous change, so here in the matter of kingship I have a similar complex story to tell.

Riggs in his version of the modernization of Thailand is eager to postulate a nineteenth-century transformation of the monarchy under King Mongkut. He makes the untenable proposition that Mongkut's chief achievement was "in gradually changing the public image of the monarch from that of a divine king, apotheosized by the magical and supernatural rites of the Brahman priests, to that of the leading human defender and patron of the Buddhist Church" (p. 101). Again he says: ". . . from the time of Mongkut on, many of the older customs and ceremonies of the divine kingship were questioned and were either reinterpreted in Buddhist terms, secularized, or neglected and gradually forgotten. Whereas in the Brahmanic tradition the king was a Devaraja or human vehicle of the gods, for Vishnu, or Siva, in the Buddhist view the king was a man . . ." (p. 99).

We have ourselves in the text of this chapter dealt with Mongkut's Buddhist revivalist achievements and orientations as a princely monk: his founding of a new sect allegedly truer to pristine disciplinary prescriptions, his scripturalism and intellectualism that strove to clean up the cobwebs of ritualism. Yet we saw that such reformism produced its own formalism and ritualism. Mongkut who disrobed as a monk to ascend the throne was open, as king, to many of the traditional claims and prescriptions surrounding kingship. While not by any means losing his interest in classical *dharmaraja* concepts of kingship, he was not at all averse to the glorification of the king as a *devaraja*. Though at the same time he became a more human king by abolishing the prohibition against watching a royal procession by the populace, and by allowing his subjects to refer to the reigning king by his personal name (Wales 1931, pp. 35, 39). And, in addition, he also strove to justify and legitimate his kingship in a life of practical achievement. Thus in him are conjoined several traditions and futuristic ingredients and a story of the *magnification* of kingship as the prelude to a change in the contours of the polity.

Riggs' thesis that Siam's modernization is connected with the emergence of a new version of Buddhist kingship suited to the times has to be placed in a proper historical perspective. There have been many previous kings – Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai – for whom the Buddhist model of king as *bodhisattva*, as *cakkavatti* and *dharmaraja*, charged with the revival, protection, and promotion of true religion, has served as a conscious paradigm for imitation, invocation, and sometimes self-serving proclamation.

It is clear that Mongkut's three Chakkri predecessors – with Rama I, the founder of the dynasty, setting the precedent – were self-conscious and conscientious practitioners of the orthodox ideas of Buddhist kingship. In this context it should not be forgotten that Mongkut's immediate predecessor had two Buddha images cast and dedicated to the memory of the first two Chakkri kings. He gave them the names Phra Phutthayotfachulalok and Phra Phutthaloetlasulalai (i.e., he gave them Buddha names) and placed them on either side of the Emerald Buddha in the palace temple of Wat Phrakaeo.[1] Riggs also

[1] Wales, however, reports contra Vella (1957) that it was Mongkut who gave the posthumous *bodhisattva* names to his three predecessors, the third name being Phra Nang Klau (1931, p. 39). Even if Wales is correct, our point is still valid.

appears to give the impression that Mongkut stressed the *kathin* festival, which he is alleged to have "elevated to a more conspicuous place." This again underscores the point that the *kathin* has historically been an important rite for Buddhist kings in Southeast Asia.

With respect to the brahmanical content of many of the court rituals and royal rites, let there be no mistake that Mongkut lustily participated in the staging of rites such as the first ploughing, the oath of allegiance, the swinging festival, the tonsure rite, and the changing of the clothes of the Emerald Buddha according to season, and the care of the royal white elephant, all these being rites in which traditionally the officiants have solely been court brahmans. It is perhaps less well known that Mongkut had installed in the second year of his reign, in 1852, a new *Lak Muang* (Pillar of the City) because his own horoscope was at variance with the existing *Lak Muang's*. This shrine of the pillar was again served by brahman functionaries. Now Mongkut, with his reformist orientations and predilection for establishing the customs of pristine Buddhism, hit upon the seeming innovation not of diminishing the brahmanical features of these rituals of kingship (which he was fully aware were part of the identity and majesty of that office) but of interpolating and *adding Buddhist sequences to them*. Indeed, this is the thrust of the evidence given by Wales, whom Riggs cites (p. 105) – the trend in favor of Buddhism in Mongkut's reign amounted to "the addition of Buddhist modifications to nearly every state ceremony." His policy was never to excise the existing rituals, only to add Buddhist sequences to them. A Buddhist sequence that can always be added to any ceremony without changing it is to have Buddhist monks recite *paritta* chants before the start of the ceremony and to feed them and give gifts afterward. Mongkut had recourse to this device, which gave the rite in question a Buddhist coloring. We realize when we consult historical sources that Mongkut's "innovations" were really in tune with ancient practice, as, for instance, documented by us in Chapter 6.

An exquisite piece of evidence giving us an insight into Mongkut's Buddhistic additions is provided by Wales with respect to the Swinging Festival, at which among other things god Shiva comes down to earth to witness the *nagas* perform. Mongkut broke with tradition by witnessing the ceremony in person instead of remaining in the palace (which is hardly eivdence of his lack of interest in the ritual). Wales tells us: "In accordance with his idea that all state ceremonies should conform to Buddhism, cocoa-nuts, bananas, and sugar-cane were placed before the Emerald Buddha, in imitation of the Brahmans in their temple. Buddhist texts were also recited for three days, and on the fifth of the waning moon food was offered to the monks who had officiated. These Buddhist observances then became a preliminary to the Hindu Festival." (1931, pp. 242–243.)

While not diminishing anything brahmanical in the rituals of kingship, Mongkut did however, as I have reported earlier, add to the annual calender new solely Buddhist festivals; he also elaborated existing Buddhist rites. At the same time, this versatile and eclectic king, imitating Western monarchy, introduced the celebration of the king's birthday and the anniversary of the coronation, in which the monks and brahmans also played complementary parts.

The verdict is that the Mongkut era saw an expanded and elaborated ceremonialism surrounding kingship, his contribution being to make Buddhist additions to existing rituals and to introduce new festivals. Certainly the umbrella

under which Mongkut sat was the nine-tiered umbrella of royalty and the throne on which he sat was the octagonal throne facing all directions. This symbolism was equally Buddhist and Hindu and capable of interpretive stress of the kind Mongkut wished to give.

In conjunction with performing the old court rituals, living the harem life of an orthodox monarch, Mongkut made an intensified attempt to live up to the ideal of a Buddhist monarch who ensures a prosperous society within which the sangha may prosper. It could be said that no Chakkri king before him (and also probably no previous king of Ayutthaya) had attained to such an exalted level of kingship. Also no predecessor had at the same time transcended traditional horizons as Mongkut did when through his Christian missionary teachers he learned Latin, English, science, astrology, and even some Christianity.

The important thing is that this enlargement of the traditional conception of the monarch coincided in time with the beginnings of a change in the political effectiveness of the monarchy as initiator of reforms, decision maker of policies, and implementer of administrative programs. This shift, to use Riggs' words, "from a traditional, largely ceremonial regime to one in which decision making and the effective exercise of governmental powers dramatically grew in importance" (p. 108), was not so much consummated in Mongkut's reign as in that of his illustrious successor, Chulalongkorn. Vella (1955) is often quoted on this point: "Chulalongkorn set up a precedent for the monarchy to exercise a legislative power it had never before wielded. The king's traditional duty of adhering to the Thammasat, or basic law, was subverted by Chulalongkorn in his reformation of the structure and functions of the Thai government. The Thai king was no longer just an executor of traditional law; he became a legislator with unlimited powers to change Thai government and Thai life."

It was Chulalongkorn again who began to feel the need to present an image of monarchy more suited to European notions as well as to his program of modernization. While he did allow his subjects to look upon his face – thereby removing an extreme aspect of his sacredness – and adopted certain features of Western life and embellished his audience hall with Victoriana, he nevertheless led the usual palace life, producing a host of children. He staged a most dazzling tonsure ceremony for his heir apparent Prince Wachirawut at which the king himself, attended by brahmans, impersonated Shiva at the top of Mount Kailasa (Gerini 1895; Wales 1931). None of the rites of kingship was trimmed, while some of the protocol of European monarchy was adopted. And the classical model of a Buddhist monarch was projected by the king, as protector, benefactor, and even head of the sangha, with the princely Wachirawut at his side.

But King Chulalongkorn, as already told, did not fully achieve his legislative and executive powers until the late 1880s. He had first to win a battle in domestic politics before he reached this apogee, a success that was, on the one hand, represented by a surmounting of a restrictive heritage received from his father and was, on the other, doomed to produce its dialectical consequence in the revolution of 1932.

It was in the immediate post-1932 years that kingship was severely trimmed both in power and ceremonial. The new politicians were averse to the performance of the annual rites (such as first ploughing) by a constitutional monarch. But such are the deep-seated impulsions of traditional symbols and values,

and imperatives of post–World War II politics that led to the emergence of military dictatorship and an era of collaboration with the United States against communism, that the image of a Buddhist monarch engaging in much of the traditional ritual, somewhat modified to suit present circumstances, has been revived in the era of Marshal Sarit and thereafter. Examples are the first ploughing ceremony, the drinking of the water of allegiance, the splendid royal barge procession for the royal *kathin* presentation (staged once in 1962), the upstaged seasonal changing of the clothes of the Emerald Buddha, and so on. Recently, the ceremony for the recognition of the crown prince as the heir apparent was held combining Western and traditional ingredients. In 1971 the decaying brahmanical temples for Shiva, Ganesh, and Vishnu standing in the famous square of the Giant Swing were being repaired and redecorated, and the court brahmans were in some demand among Bangkok's fashionable elite. When I visited Bangkok again in 1974, I found that the tall giant rotting wooden pillars of the Giant Swing had been replaced at some great expense. Perhaps we shall witness the swing ceremony again and marvel at the descent of Shiva to the kingdom of Siam when the portals of Kailasa are opened.

12. The Sangha Acts of 1902, 1941, and 1963

Bishop Pallegoix, whose two-volume *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam* was published in 1854, informs us that he had spent 24 years in the kingdom of Siam. It is therefore almost certain that his observations relate primarily to the reign of Rama III (1824–1851). Being a Catholic missionary he may have exaggerated the "laxness" of the Siamese *phra*;[1] nevertheless, his information on the structure of the sangha and its linkage with kingship is invaluable.

Certain important points emerge from his account, parts of which are quoted below: firstly, that there was a sangha hierarchy, headed by the *sangkharat* and below whom were the titled abbots of royal monasteries flanked by their assistants and secretaries; secondly, that in fact the authority and powers vested in the *sangkharat* were circumscribed; next, that it is by contrast the king who was the crucial fountain of authority and source of titles in his position as protector and patron of the religion; and, finally, that the department of ecclesiastical administration (*Krom Dharmakara/ Thammakan*), which we have already identified as being part of the machinery of state administration in the Ayutthayan era, was probably actively functioning around the mid-nineteenth century as an adjudicator of monastic crimes, enforcer of monastic discipline, and as keeper of registers of monasteries and their residents, religious and lay.

On the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the relative powers of the king and the *sangkharat*, Pallegoix had this to say:

> The monks have a kind of hierarchy which they follow very closely. The first rank among them is called *sangkharat*, that is, king of the cenobites. The *sangkharat* is nominated by the king. He has jurisdiction over all monks and all pagodas in the kingdom. But it is not apparent that he exercises his jurisdiction in any way. All his authority has been reduced to making, from time to time, reports to the king on religious matters, and in presiding over the assemblies of abbots, when called by the king, in order to negotiate or judge certain religious matters which concern the monks.

[1] He claimed that "the great number of *Phra* do not hesitate to chat while walking, looking right and left, running into one house after another, and committing many acts contrary to the rule. Idleness, lazyness, vagrancy, pride, arrogance, vanity, gluttony, and immorality are many of the vices which are encountered among the talapoins" (Vol. II, p. 43).

After the *sangkharat* come the important abbots of the royal monasteries who have the title *somdet-chao* and *raxakhana*, terms which mean the princes of the monks. Again it is the king who nominates and installs them because he is the supreme head of Buddhism and among his titles he always takes that of protector and keeper of the sect of Buddhism.

Each abbot is master in his monastery. He has under him a chief vicar, called *chao-khun-balat* and a chief secretary, called *chao-khun-samu*. Last are the ordinary monks, who have below them the *nen* or *samanen* . . . (1854, Vol. II, pp. 27–28).

The functioning of the king's department administering the affairs of the sangha is described as follows:

The entire order of high monks is subject to the authority of a prince whom the king has designated to keep watch over their good conduct. This prince has under his command a certain number of agents, called *sangkhari*, who have the right to seize and bring delinquents to the tribunal. There they are divested of their yellow robes, caned and sent to prison and even sent to forced labour according to the gravity of the crimes of which they are found guilty.

As far as one can see much of Pallegoix's account was probably applicable to the Mongkut era as well. Although the first three Chakkri kings in their various ways took an enormous interest in Buddhism, it was in the reign of Rama IV (Mongkut) (1851–1868), who as we have already seen was himself previously a monk and the founder of what later came to be known as the Thammayut sect, that a more comprehensive organization of the entire sangha on a country-wide scale was begun. But it would be a mistake to think that he effected any vigorous overhauling of the sangha organization as a whole; that was achieved in his successor's time. I have already discussed in the previous chapter Mongkut's contribution to a reform of Buddhism in the mid-nineteenth century: his insistence on textual knowledge and the practice of a rigid *vinaya* discipline, his championing of scripturalism, and his devaluation of noncanonical ritual accretions, in short, his attempt on the one hand to purify religion and to adhere to its pristine form and on the other to initiate changes and to champion Buddhist rationalism to meet the intellectual challenges of the nineteenth century. Mongkut's administrative policy of the sangha as king was part and parcel of his wider reform of religion. The organizational plan built on earlier precedents may be described as follows (see Wales 1965, C. Reynolds 1972 for details). The titular head of the sangha was the supreme patriarch; below him were ranked titled monks, of whom some 80 bearing the *rachakhana* titles were accorded the greatest respect. Most of the ranks and titles, the insignia of office and privileges that went with them, the most important being the personal retinue of assistants, were already established and continued into the nineteenth century.

A basic distinction traditionally existed between royal monasteries and ordinary or commoner monasteries. The heads of the royal monasteries chosen from the *rachakhana* holders were appointed and installed by the

king at the beginning of every reign. Each head was assisted by two officials also royally appointed. In contrast, the heads and other officials of the ordinary monasteries were appointed by the people or by nobles who founded and supported the institution.

On top of this ground-level structure of monasteries was erected this hierarchy: From the heads of the royal monasteries the king appointed four ecclesiastical officials (*chaokhana hyai*), each of who with his assistant administered the four great divisions (*khana*) into which the order was divided: the northern (left) and southern (right) divisions, whose members were the scholar-monks (town dwellers) (*gantha dhurah*), the central division, to which were assigned the hermit monks (forest dwellers) (*vipassana dhurah*), and, finally, the newly constituted Thammayuttika group (*khana*), which all through King Mongkut's reign was administered as part of the one Mahanikai order and gained its status as an independent *nikaya* (sect) only in King Chulalongkorn's reign.

We have already referred to Pallegoix's statement about a department of ecclesiastical administration (probably the *Krom Thammakan*) that kept registers (of monasteries and their residents, religious and lay) and judged monastic crimes and enforced discipline. By the beginning of the Bangkok period another department called *Krom Sangkari* (later, *Sangkhakari*) appears to have come into existence as a unit subordinate to the *Krom Thammakan*.[2]

The question is: How did the king (or rather the relevant governmental agency such as the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs) select monks for appointment to the ecclesiastical offices? One device was the holding of religious examinations under royal auspices and administered by the heads of royal monasteries. Degrees of *parian* for Pali studies were granted together with monthly payments from the treasury. (The hermit monks did not sit examinations and were thus excluded from high ecclesiastical office.)

Combined with the examination system was the ranking of ecclesiastical offices according to *sakti na* grades, as in the case of lay civil and military officials. The *sakti na*, as applied to civil and military hierarchies, was an index of the prestige of office and the emoluments that went with it. By applying the same nomenclature to the religious hierarchy, the higher ecclesiastical officers and monks who were holders of office or aspirants to it were brought in line with national conceptual structures of power and respect.

[2] Around 1888–1889, during King Chulalongkorn's reign, the *Krom Thammakan* and *Krom Sangkhakari* merged to form the Department of Public Instruction, which later developed into a ministry. The Ministry of Public Instruction took the name *Thammakan*, and *Sanghakari* labeled the unit dealing with the ecclesiastical administration. Even today the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs remains part of the Ministry of Education. By 1893 the ecclesiastical department had enlarged into four sections: the bureau (*wen*) for royal ceremonies, for monastic registers, of monastic lands and rents, and a legal division (*kong*) to investigate cases. See Wyatt (1969); C. Reynolds (1972), pp. 19–22.

In judging the effectiveness and grass-roots ramifications of these reforms one ought not to exaggerate the relevance of the centralization and hierarchization achieved, even during Mongkut's reign, in both the religious and the civil domains. We know that it was not until a few decades later in his successor's reign that the central government began to forge effective civil administrative units and organs below the provincial level. Many of the features that were true of the reign of Rama III were also true of Mongkut's (Rama IV) reign, namely, that the relation between government and people was tenuous and that the main role of the central government was to conduct state ceremonies, to build public works whether they be temples or palaces, to levy taxes, to maintain internal order, to secure the interests of the country against external threats. Mongkut, however, had gone further in the business of political mobilization and control than his predecessors and laid the foundations for a political leap on the part of his successor.

Therefore, when we look at the monastic organization, it comes as no surprise that during Mongkut's time the *sangkharat's* (*sangharaja*) jurisdiction over monks and monasteries was weak and ill defined. The multitude of village and other commoner wat founded and supported by the laity continued to administer their own affairs untampered. As previously described by Pallegoix, the *sangkharat* and his ecclesiastical officials had everything to do with national projects such as revision of doctrinal texts and little to do with the administration of individual monasteries (Wales 1934, p. 244). No doubt some of the breaches of discipline were adjudicated by the courts under the charge of the four departments, and in extreme cases the guilty monk was unfrocked and handed over to a special secular court. But we have seen in Chapter 11 how the shallowness of the penetration of the ecclesiastical hierarchy into the provinces came into evidence when, under King Chulalongkorn, the princely monk Wachirayan undertook to use the monastic network for the spread of primary education. We also witnessed how the monk-directors of the education program saw the need for a more effective ecclesiastical network and set about devising a chain of authority extending from *tambon* at the base up to district and from there to provincial and *monthon* levels, taking the structure of the civil administration itself as their model. Finally, we saw how the erection of this ecclesiastical system also meant the subordination of the sangha to the political authority to a degree never before experienced in Thai history.

The Sangha Act of 1902

The act of 1902 relating to the administration of the sangha passed by King Chulalongkorn was thus the formalization and legitimation of developments in ecclesiastical organization precipitated by the sangha's involvement with the historic experiment of spreading primary education in Thailand. We have already mentioned that the education directors sent out in 1899 to each *monthon* were charged with the direction of *both*

education and religion and that Wachirayan was explicit in his expectation that the promotion of the state's secular primary educational program would somehow benefit religion.

The work of the monk-directors (in cooperation with the provincial ecclesiastical officials who already existed or whom they themselves appointed) produced the precedents and the information for a national plan. The directors drew up plans in their respective *monthon* for the grouping of monasteries into *khana* at various provincial and district levels, and where ecclesiastical positions were vacant, helped fill them. It is the reports of these directors on the state of the *monthon* and *khana* organization of the sangha in their areas and the improvements they had subsequently effected that provided the basis and outline for the Sangha Act of 1902 insofar as it dealt with the overall administrative hierarchy on a national scale.

Furthermore, from their investigation of the organization of the sangha emerged 17 points that were based on actual practice and were to become standard prescriptions, if not fully incorporated in the act itself: They referred to procedures for conferring ordination, rules relating to the movement of monks from one monastery to another, the method of compiling the annual register of monks, the filing of annual reports from lower ecclesiastical officials to their superiors, provisions for managing the proceeds of monastic lands, the retirement of aged abbots and the appointment of their successors, and so on (C. Reynolds 1972, pp. 253–254).

The act was drawn up and promulgated according to procedures that match the classical Asokan and Sinhalese models we have already outlined. It would appear that it was King Chulalongkorn who took the initiative in having the act prepared. (This was a time when Wachirayan and his monks had withdrawn from participating in the educational program.) The head of the Department of Religious Affairs drafted the document; it was placed before the cabinet and the heads of the four divisions of the sangha and their deputies for their approval; it was thereafter declared law.

Prince Wachirayan, now supreme patriarch, attached this preface to the act when it was applied to North Thailand some years later:

> Although monks are already subject to the law contained in the Vinaya, they must also subject themselves to the authority which derives from the specific and general law of the State. In addition, they should also follow local customs which are not contrary to these other two sets of laws.
>
> In sum, monks must obey three types of laws: the law of the land, the Vinaya and custom. This Act is the law of the land; thus it should be known, understood, and followed correctly (Keyes 1971, p. 25).

Wachirayan did not face any problems regarding rendering unto his king what was his and to the Buddha what was his: The order of attachment for monks was first the *vinaya*, then the law of the state in which they found themselves. In this case the law of the state was ostensibly to

strengthen the sangha. Custom came last and was rightfully followed if it did not contradict the other two. There is a sting here as we shall see shortly: When the law of the state is promulgated from Bangkok, a regional custom of an outlying province may be construed as being at variance with the orthodoxy of the capital's norm.

Let me now outline the main provisions of this act before pinpointing its implications for the relationship between the sangha and the polity. The act[3] begins by professing that it does not seek to "interfere with any sectarian activity or creed," which is a matter regulated by the sangha, but is concerned only with "the field of public administration" of the sangha and the securing of "the stability and solidarity of the Sangha and the continuous development of Buddhism." This statement is, of course, in conformity with the orthodox doctrine that the code of discipline (*vinaya*) and the activities of monks as a community (*sanghakamma*) are matters internal to the sangha; it also tacitly asserts that there is a field of administrative regulation of the sangha that is a legitimate concern of the political authority. Whether in practice such a distinction can be maintained is one of the issues we should want to examine.

The act establishes an ascending hierarchy in the following order: abbots of individual monasteries, district ecclesiastical governors, town ecclesiastical governors, provincial ecclesiastical governors, and, finally, at the top four governors general (and their four deputies) representing the four divisions of the sangha. Let us first deal with the top and the bottom and thereafter with the intervening levels of authority.

1. The sangha, we note, is divided into four parts, three of which are geographical divisions of the Mahanikai sect – namely, the north, south and central region – the fourth being the Thammayut sect, which is given for the first time official recognition as a separate entity within the sangha. Each division has a senior monk as governor general, who in turn has a deputy. These eight elders "are His Majesty's advisers with regard to ecclesiastical affairs and administration" and their decisions "under His Majesty's grace" are final. (We note that there is no reference whatsoever to the appointment of the *sangkharat* as supreme head of the order, an omission that is intriguing and invites speculation.)

2. The office of abbot of a monastery is the first and no doubt a vital rung on the ladder, and the attention paid to the definition of this office is one of the most interesting aspects of the act. But before examining this definition we need to take note of the categorization of monasteries. The act recognizes three categories of monasteries, royal monasteries (*wat luang*), commoner monasteries (*wat raad*), and ecclesiastical abodes (which have not yet been consecrated). The monasteries are implicitly further

[3] I quote from the following document: *Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha* (Thailand, The Mahamakuta Educational Council, B.E. 2506, 1963). This document has an English translation of the Sangha Acts of 1902, 1941, and 1963.

differentiated by the recognition that those situated in Bangkok or the major towns are superior to the rest. This is made clear by the fact that the king was concerned with controlling personally the appointment of ecclesiastical officers in Bangkok and in the important royal wat. The act makes it clear (Article 9) that royal permission must be sought for the building of new monasteries and for the conservation of a "newly repaired old monastery or for developing an Ecclesiastical Abode into a monastery." Finally, the act recognizes three kinds of monastic property – the monastery compound, the monastic estate, and the monastic "revenue estate."[4] Now to consider the office of abbot (*chao awat*).

a. As regards appointment, the act says that where His Majesty himself does not personally select and appoint an abbot to a royal or other monastery:
   (1) In Bangkok it is the duty of the district governor of *rachakhana* rank to summon a meeting of the monks of the monastery and lay devotees in order to select an abbot.
   (2) For other urban town monasteries, the relevant ecclesiastical district governor appoints in the same way, but if the appointment is disputed, the ecclesiastical town governor is empowered to appoint.

b. Of the abbot's powers and duties, the following seem the most crucial:
   (1) The education of children under his care (this is in furtherance of the primary education program);
   (2) The maintenance of order and the adjudication of disputes among monks (and laymen) in his monastery;
   (3) The notification to higher authorities of the names and the number of *bhikkhus* and laymen in his care; the issuing of identity cards to monks or novices journeying away from their monastery. These provisions (which indicate the attempt to regulate and control those who claim to be monks) are further strengthened by the requirement (Article 15) that every monk and novice "be enlisted in a monastery." Of this provision Yoneo Ishii has commented: "Because of this stipulation each monk is obliged to belong to a particular monastery and is no longer permitted to live as an independent religionist. The foundation was thus laid for a system in which the state placed the monks under its control."[5]

3. Now we can deal with the hierarchical levels in between the governors general and their deputies at the top and the vast number of abbots of individual monasteries at the bottom. This intervening hierarchy is differentiated into two subsystems:

a. That which pertains to the capital city of Bangkok, where the chief functionaries are the ecclesiastical district governors who are invested with the *rachakhana* title and who are personally selected by the king;

[4] These distinctions are accepted to date. They separate the compound of the monastery (*thi wat*) from property owned elsewhere (*thi thorani song*) and from property that is not owned by the monastery but whose revenue has been gifted to it by a pious layman (*kalapana*).

[5] One can appreciate the import of this requirement better when one notes by comparison that in Burma politically active and militant monks have systematically refused census taking and issuance of identity papers to monks (see D. E. Smith, 1965).

b. That which pertains to the provinces, where the three important levels are the provincial ecclesiastical governors, the town ecclesiastical governors, the district ecclesiastical governors, in that order. (These positions also accord with the hierarchy of titles, such as the superior *rachakhana* and the subordinate *phrakhru*, given office-holding monks).

We may single out two features of this ecclesiastical organization for comment:

First, the powers are so graduated that the higher office has jurisdiction over the inferior office of the next level. Thus a superior ecclesiastical officer has the right to hear appeals emanating from below, and to adjudicate overlapping orders given by an inferior officer. Each provincial town or district governor has the right to appoint his own deputy and to dismiss him from office. Perhaps the most significant rule regarding appointments is that in the provinces, although it is the ecclesiastical provincial governor who is empowered to issue a certificate of appointment of a district governor, this certificate *must be "counter-sealed" by the secular provincial governor of the state.* The appointments of the ecclesiastical provincial and town governors are said to be "through the Majesty's grace and discretion." Whatever this means, we can infer that the secular authorities keep a tight regulating, if not controlling, rein over the appointment of the superior ecclesiastical officials.

Second, each ecclesiastical office-holder enjoys powers of patronage in that, apart from appointing his deputy and assistant inspectors (*chao adhikara*), where necessary he can appoint a number of *personal assistants* who are given special names and can be said to form the retinue or entourage of the officer. Thus the district governor is entitled to appoint two assistants (*samuha* and *baidika*) and an additional third (*palad*) if he has the *phrakhru* title. The town governor is entitled to appoint five personal assistants (*palad, vinayadhara, vinayadhamma, samuha,* and *baidika*), and the provincial governor six assistants, three of who are of *phrakhru* status (the first three listed previously with an additional *phrakhru* prefix, the next two, plus a sixth called *sangharakkha*). The ecclesiastical provincial governor is also entitled to confer the *phrakhru* title on the district governors appointed by him. We shall see later how these positions are valued by contemporary monks and how they constitute targets of achievement within the monastic system.

We may sum up the salient political features of the 1902 act as follows:

The fact that the act failed to specify the supreme patriarch's powers I interpret as an omission favoring the king's acting as the political and administrative head of the sangha when he so desired. The king either directly or indirectly through his secular officers regulated the important ecclesiastical appointments; he personally made the appointments in the capital and, by controlling the conferment of the *rachakhana* title, regulated the high-level appointments in the provinces. Indeed, at the very top, the eight *mahathera* who were in charge of the four divisions of the sangha are described as "advisers" to the king with regard to ecclesiastical adminis-

tration and as making decisions "under his Majesty's grace." That the sangha's administrative system ultimately derived its legitimacy and muscle from the powers of the secular authority is made abundantly clear in Article 42: "A layman . . . revolting against the authority of an Ecclesiastical Governor who acts in accordance with the provisions of this law *is also revolting against the authority of a State official* and is liable to punishment thereof" (my italics).

We should also note that the sangha hierarchy imitated the ranks of the civil administration and that the main positions of ecclesiastical power, the highest titles, the most important abbotships of royal temples were concentrated in Bangkok-Thonburi, in the same manner as the highest political offices from the king and his royal princes to the highest nobility, who shared the tasks of civil administration. Whatever changes have taken place in later times in the details of ecclesiastical organization, the fundamental features of the sangha hierarchy and its relation to political authority were molded in 1902 and have not changed up to the present time.

Finally, the act of 1902 reflects a vital aspect of Thailand's perspective as a new developing nation. From the point of view of Thai ideology, whose political and religious components form an organic unity, the modernization of the country (by instituting bureaucratic forms of civil administration and promoting public welfare, economic and educational programs, etc.) is totally consistent with the conservation and strengthening of Buddhism to be achieved (partly, at least) through the bureaucratic rationalization of the administration of the sangha. The preamble to the act of 1902 states that Thai belief that the modernization of society must also necessarily attempt the rationalization of the sangha's system of administration in order that the Buddhist religion can be conserved:

> Whereas the amendment of the law and the reformation of the administrative system of the State have brought about manifold developments and outstanding progress to the country, it is obvious that the religious affairs of the Buddhist Church are also of no less importance to the development both of Buddhism and of the country in that, systematically administered, they will serve to attract more people to the study and practice of Buddhism under the guidance of Bhikkhus, thereby leading them to the right mode of living in accordance with the Buddha's instructions.

Let us now deal with one other feature that accompanied the implementation of the act, though it was not incorporated into the act itself. It stems from that part of the reports of the monk-directors dealing with the Buddhist practices and routines they had observed in the monasteries they had visited and which they tended to judge against a Bangkok-based Thammayut-derived orthodoxy that was not appreciative of other long-established regional traditions and dialectal variants. As C. Reynolds has acutely commented, the reports of the education directors were not in-

tended to reflect regional cultural patterns; the directors selected data on conditions that Bangkok officials wanted to see improved (regular preaching, annual performances of Visakha Bucha, observance of weekly holy days, a completed sangha hierarchy) but omitted systematic recording of data that would reflect strong regional traditions (C. Reynolds 1972, p. 263, fn.). (We may add to the list of foregoing practices the bimonthly recitation of *patimokkha*, which was also a matter of concern.) Another assumption that was prevalent as part of what I have called the "scripturalist orientation" is that exposure to and the study of books and texts inevitably led to a higher standard of moral observance among monks, an assumption that is also embedded in the modern slogan that it is the business of monks to first and foremost study.

Although the Sangha Act of 1902 did not deal with these monastic observances, yet is is clear that one of the objectives of erecting a national sangha organization with its center in Bangkok was the elimination of regional variants considered dangerous to orthodoxy in the interests of a national standardization and homogenization. The logic of this step was the fear that regional Buddhisms were intimately linked with regional political autonomy. Hence given the perspectives that the Chulalongkorn-Damrong measures were devised for the realization of a country-wide civil administrative structure that would achieve a national administrative integration, and that the creation of a national sangha hierarchy was politically part and parcel of this plan, the continued presence of regional cultural and religious diversity might have appeared problematic.[6] At this phase of Thai history the idea that cultural diversity could exist inside a single national political framework was difficult to conceptualize and accept (as today a comparable problem is presented by the hill tribes to a self-consciously Buddhist and nationalistic polity).

Although the sangha law of 1902 had as its purpose a uniform ecclesiastical organization and a standard set of Buddhist observances applicable to the entire kingdom, the authorities were appreciative of the fact of variant traditions in the far provinces and the logistical and personnel problems impeding effective implementation of the act. Keeping pace with Damrong's concession of indirect rule in the north and of working from the inner provinces outward, the act was not implemented uniformly and did not take effect in northern Thailand until 1910, when the king issued a separate edict for its application in the outlying regions. In this connection, the manner of dealing with the variant Buddhist traditions of the north, called the "Yuan" sect or cult, is instructive, for its resonances were felt for some decades thereafter.

[6] "To Chulalongkorn, Buddhism as traditionally practised in the kingdom represented a potential threat to national integration because its local manifestations were articulated with autonomous polities" (Keyes 1971, p. 22). This comment would agree with our discussion in Chapter 10 of the impact of the Damrong civil administrative reforms on the old provincial ruling families, particularly in the north and northeast.

We should preface our account with the observation that in 1874 Chulalongkorn, having assumed real power in the previous year, sent a royal commissioner to reside in Chiangmai, thereby taking an important step in his policy of bringing distant provinces under the control of the capital. The kingdom of Chiangmai had traditionally been one of the most autonomous of the satellite principalities. An important consideration in Damrong's Interior Ministry's taking control over the north was to regulate the lumbering contracts that foreign companies had already made with the Chiangmai ruler. These contracts had produced difficulties that might lead, it was feared, into imperial powers becoming embroiled on behalf of their nationals.[7] Another stimulus was a Shan uprising in Phrae province in 1925, which again underscored the weakness of Bangkok's hold on the Lao states.

Together with this traditional political semiautonomy of the north went a separate religious tradition within the larger Theravada framework. The Yuan regional Buddhism, as compared with the central Siamese form, was characterized by its own sacred script, distinctive rituals and festivals, and sangha organization[8]; its spread was among the Tai-speaking peoples of certain Burmese Shan regions, northern Laos, and southern China. The individual monasteries enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, and although there was a distinction between wat supported by royalty and nobility and by commoners. The groupings of *khu ba* ("esteemed teachers"), often credited with mystical powers, and their large followings were important crystallizations in Yuan Buddhism (Keyes 1971).

As the 1892 Provincial Reorganization Act served (after 1906) as the vehicle of administratively subordinating the north, so did the Sangha Act of 1902 (after 1910) in the attempt to "standardize" Buddhism. Prince Patriarch Wachirayan took a personal interest in its implementation in the north; he made a trip to the northern provinces in 1913 going as far as Phrae. "His intent in all his journeys was to make certain that the local monks were correctly following the Vinaya and to bring the local orders into the emergent Thai Sangha hierarchy. He established the practice of having local monks come to Bangkok to improve their studies of the Dharma" (Keyes, p. 25). He filled ecclesiastical positions with a mixture of Yuan and Siamese monks as a way of integrating the two traditions. Siamese monks were in fact sent to distant provinces like Maehongson in order to introduce and spread for the first time the alleged orthodox traditions of Bangkok Buddhism. But such confident policy of proselytizing the

[7] See Riggs 1967, pp. 137–138 on the role of the newly formed Forestry Department under the guidance of Slade, a British forestry expert, in regulating lumbering operations.

[8] Similarly, the Laotian variant of Buddhism, which differed in certain aspects of sangha organization, script, and rites (see Berval 1959; Archaimbault 1971; Levy 1968) colored local Buddhism in northeastern Thailand (see Tambiah 1968, 1970 for some examples persisting today, in spite of national integration and Bangkokian influence).

new orthodoxy met its resistance and modification in the challenge mounted by Khu Ba Siwichai, of which more anon.

The Act of 1941

The Political Background

The immediate political context for the Sangha Act of 1941 is the revolution of 1932, by which absolute monarchy was replaced by constitutional monarchy. The true proportions of this revolution must be clearly understood to appreciate the course of politics in modern Thailand up to the present. It was by no means a revolution of the masses; it was most definitely the action of bureaucratic civil officials and army officers of non-royal origins against the "absolutism" of the monarchy and the domination of the royal princes in the highest levels of administrative service.[8] In some ways it was an inevitable result of the changes initiated by King Chulalongkorn some 30 to 40 years previously – the creation of centralized bureaucracies and administrative machinery and the training of Thai youth, both locally and abroad, to fill them. By their very action of sponsoring and implementing the early stages of modernization, the king and the princes created a body of army personnel and a category of educated civilians, an intelligentsia in a loose sense, who were destined to replace them as the power in the land. It is understandable that the confrontation took place at the time of the world depression, when especially the army and the ministry of Defense, resenting the reduction in the salaries and positions of senior members of the armed services (and civil service), were moved to action. As Coast remarked: "This was a heaven-sent chance for the civilian plotters, whose younger military counterparts were now easily able to make contacts with disgruntled senior officers – a thing that would have been quite impossible ten years previously" (1953, p. 3). The following statement by Wilson aptly enumerates the web of circumstances leading to the coup d'état of 1932:

> Moreover, for much of the period from the late nineteenth century until the coup d'état in 1932, the distinction between political and administrative functions of the government was obscured by a broad common interest in modernization, maintenance of independence, revision of treaties, and expansion of government activities. With the declining urgency of the struggle for independence and legal autonomy, especially after the renegotiation of treaties in the early 1920's, the impact of world economic decline on the national budget, and the divisive effect of Western antimonarchist thought, the question of

[8] Wilson quotes Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, leader of the coup, as saying: "At the very base [of my reasons for joining in the coup] was the birth of the feeling that in the government at that time high officials and princes acted according to their whims and were not willing to pay heed to smaller people even though there were reasons for believing them" (1962, p. 173).

political power became more distinct. It developed into an issue which was essentially the same for both military and civil officials. They were opposed to either military or civil princes. Any potential conflict between soldiers and civilians was submerged in the actual conflict between royalty and nonroyalty (1972, p. 172).

Now the Sangha Act of 1941, which was intended to liberalize and democratize the system of sangha administration, inevitably bore the characteristic marks of its sponsors. What we have in the so-called constitutional period from 1932 onward is the pull and push of two orientations. On the one hand, most of the rulers since 1932 stemmed from and had as their constituencies the armed forces and the civilian bureaucracy, which were conservative and hierarchically minded in a deeply traditional sense; on the other hand, the original rebels and promoters of the revolution and their supporters were also imbued with and galvanized by ideas of democracy and representative government as practiced in the culturally, politically, and economically dominant West. At the more concrete level of political action, we have this tension represented by the authoritative dominance of the army and army-backed cliques in the government of the country (the prime creature and leader of the armed forces being Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram) and their vacillating and uneasy tolerance of a national assembly of popularly elected representatives oriented toward parliamentary procedures (the vocal champion of this end of the political spectrum being the famous and controversial civilian Dr. Pridi Phanomyong). This tension was evidenced by a plethora of constitutions and frequent dissolutions of alleged irresponsible elected assemblies.

The years immediately following the coup d'état were filled with inner struggles among the coup leaders, and soon the military gained dominance over the Pridi faction. Between 1933 and 1938, during the years of Phraya Phahon's governments, the military itself was in uneasy balance and in inner conflict, but it soon asserted itself under the undisputed leadership of Luang Phibunsongkhram, whose first period of office as prime minister lasted from December 1938 to July 1944.

In 1938 during its second term the national assembly's role began to decline with Phibun's abrupt dismissal and dissolution of it over the budget debate. Although it was reelected subsequently, it was held on a firm leash by Phibun until nearly the end of World War II, when in 1944 he was forced to resign (Wilson 1962, pp. 204–205).

Although in the long run the leaders of the armed forces in Thailand have achieved political dominance – a state of affairs that is more or less a continuation of traditional political style with the difference that the "absolutist" monarch was replaced by a "near-absolutist" coterie of soldiers and their associates – yet the thirties were mildly heady times with the whiff of political activism and the feeling of a loosening of rigid social bonds sensed among some educated commoners and monks. As far as religion is concerned, the temper of the times expressed itself in two ways: on the part

of the politicians an attempt at purification of religion expressed in an effort to regulate the Sangha's financial and building activities and to control the political activities of monks, and, on the part of some monks, a feeling that the monastic authority structure should be more democratized. Included in the latter is the clerical protest that originated in northern Thailand against the domination by the Bangkok-based ecclesiastical hierarchy. But the temper of the times was in some ways not so much new as an accentuation of trends sponsored by the modernizing and nation-building propaganda and activities of the last few absolutist kings, who themselves had made further inroads into sangha autonomy and achieved new levels of political regulation. Already in the twenties, during the rule of Rama VI (King Wachirawut), it was felt by the modernizing elite that unregulated temple construction and ritual acted as a drain on the time, money, and energy of the people. Rama VI tried to check the participation of officials in ceremonies that took up a great deal of their time (and still do now in the seventies):

> Rama VI had already checked further temple and *prachedi* construction by simply finishing in this reign what had already been begun and by inaugurating a fund for the repair of the old buildings that were the most dilapidated. Prajadhipok exerted his influence towards developing the idea that the merit derived from the repair and embellishment of ruined temples was as great as that acquired by building new. . . . In the last days of the absolute monarchy there was an increased interest in religion in Siam; but it took the form of a general curiosity regarding abstractions and metaphysics, a disdain of the practical and material aspects, and a moderate revival of the mystical element (Thompson 1941, p. 638).

A correlative expression in the thirties was the feeling that elaborate cremation ceremonies were an enormous drain on the savings of the pious and that the monks had a vested interest in continuing them and therefore, evinced sub rosa opposition toward the government's attempt to change them. In these attitudes and policies we discern features indexical of scripturalism, deprecation of grossly expensive and unremunerative ritual, and so on, that accompany a modernizing stance in many so-called posttraditional societies. We shall return later to these nation-building themes propagated since the twenties and examine their impact on the sangha and religion.

Here let us continue with the attempted reform of religion in the thirties. The National Assembly politicians and the newspapers of this era aired the alleged abuses of the monks and publicized opposed and contentious views about the state of the Buddhist religion. Landon, for instance, cites the newspaper *Thai Mai* as printing articles on two occasions in 1933 mentioning abuses in temple government as a reason for reform:

> Writers claimed that there was no uniformity of temple government throughout Siam. Some temples were governed by one man and some by a committee.

Some monks ate rice in the evening contrary to rules, some had cock-fights for sport, some smoked opium, some used the drug Indian hemp. The suggestion was made that there be fewer temples with higher standards and that all be governed by the committee system.

Another article suggested that boys who are too young and men who are too old, or are physically infirm, should not be permitted to enter the order. The practical suggestion was made that every monk and novice be required to carry a passport. If anyone misbehaved the authorities could easily trace him (1939, pp. 216–217).

The statement that "some temples were governed by one man and some by a committee" presumably refers to the different administrative systems of royal wat (*wat luang*), in which the abbot has prime authority, and commoner wat (*wat raad*), in which the wat committee composed of the abbot, monks, and laymen is charged with administering the finances.

Other abuses cited were the ignorance of some religious inmates (especially the very old and young) and alleged spending of temple funds by head monks for their own comfort and that of their relatives; or that some had even provided for families contrary to *vinaya* rules. Although these and other similar views were aired by newspapermen (and assemblymen), two judgments can be made about their nature. Firstly, scarcely any of these views could be regarded as violently anticlerical or radical secularist in any sweeping sense; they are expressions of the spirit of sangha purification. Secondly, the airing of abuses was really of secondary importance to the more important preoccupation with and consideration of the role of monks in the modern world – of this more later.

Now to deal with the deliberations of the Assembly, which were more important because their decisions touching upon sangha affairs were capable of implementation. The Assembly resolutely moved toward a greater control of monastic finances and temple building. In April 1934 a committee (quite independent of the Department of Church Properties) was appointed, officially, to clarify the confusion of rights pertaining to situations in which ptivate persons had been allowed by individual abbots to build their own properties on wat ground but, in fact, to probe further into the financial status of monasteries. It was also charged with appraising the real value of church property and the extent of repairs it required.

In the following August some acrid comments were expressed in the Assembly debate over the proposed building of 122 new *wats*. There was general disapproval of the sentiments expressed by one member who complained that the monks were lazy and not beneficial to the people, and that it would be a waste of money to build more *wats* in which they might live comfortable and plutocratic lives. As a result of this stormy debate the Assembly secured what had heretofore been a royal right – that of authorizing future *wat* building (Thompson 1941, p. 639).

This right of authorizing future wat building is exercised today by the *Mahatherasamakon*, the supreme council of monks.

Church property and finance became an issue in September 1936 in the Assembly as a result of revelations that some wat were expending thousands of ticals on new buildings without asking the state's permission. It was an issue of discussion during the secret debates in the summer of 1938, and the Assembly sought specific information on the subject from the government, which replied "that the Buddhist church disposed of Tcs 2,502,776 in liquid assets, excluding its real estate"[9] and that this sum "was deposited in a bank and brought in Tcs. 100,000 in interest, which was administered by the Ministry of Finance exclusively for church interests" (p. 639). We thus see in these events an attempt by the political authority to tighten its control over certain aspects of the sangha's economic affairs, particularly with respect to building religious structures and the administration of the "central *sasana* property." But we should note at the same time that the important rights of control of abbots over property owned by individual monasteries (e.g., *the wat* and *thi thoranisong*) or over revenue estates (*kalapana*) were not questioned and have not ever been questioned up to date. Also that the political authority's right to regulate the building of new temple structures has not diminished the building proclivities for purposes of merit acquisition on the part of the pious masses at large, as is well attested by trends in modern times.

If the foregoing are examples of the attempted regulation of the sangha by the politicians of the thirties, we must now examine the manifestations of this same political activism within the ranks of the sangha itself, manifestations that might reflect the political ferment among the emergent political public in the society at large. An interesting phenomenon of the times was the case of Phra Siwichai (Sri Vijaya), who hailed from the north and who as a *khu ba* of charismatic qualities seems to have been the focal point of support by northern fellow monks and laymen. In 1920, while he was at Lamphun, Phra Siwichai had been summoned before the ecclesiastical court in the capital to answer charges that he had disobeyed the ecclesiastical governor of the province.

His disobedience was a direct challenge to an important clause in the Sangha Act of 1902: Without being officially recognized as a preceptor by the national sangha hierarchy he had ordained monks and novices.

> The right to determine whom [*sic*] should be permitted to ordain monks was a particularly significant issue to the leadership of the Thai Sangha since exercise of this right by monks not sanctioned by the Sangha could lead to the development or perpetuation of sects whose existence would pose a direct threat to the unity of the Thai church. For his contravention of Sangha regulations Khru Ba Siwichai was confined to a temple in Lamphan in about 1915 or 1916 by the Viceroy of the North.
>
> During his confinement large numbers of people came to "make merit" with Khru Ba Siwichai since it was believed that his reputed holiness would enhance

[9] According to Thompson, the real estate was valued at no more than one-half million ticals.

the merit of such acts. This popularity greatly troubled Thai officials in the North for it was feared that Khru Ba Siwichai was potentially a leader of a millenarian movement with revolutionary implications (Keyes 1971, pp. 26–27).

Fully aware of this 40-year-old monk's popularity in Lamphun and Chiangmai and advised by the then viceroy, Prince Bovaradej, against laying any criminal charge against him, the Bangkok authorities absolved him and sent him back in honor, declaring that his confinement was sufficient punishment: "A crowd of ten thousand gave the hero-priest an enthusiastic welcome, all nationalities vying with each other to do him honor. He walked on a carpet made of the silk head-dresses of his Shan admirers, who carried him over the muddiest passages" (Thompson 1941, p. 642). In the year 1935 he was again brought before the ecclesiastical authorities in Bangkok for not conforming with the rules of the sangha: Apparently this time certain northern monks had severed connections with their ecclesiastical superiors and declared Phra Siwichai to be their leader, on the strength of his allegedly granting them dispensation from the need for additional learning as encouraged by the sangha. Some of these leaders were even arrested when they refused to allow ecclesiastical officials to inspect their monasteries. Once again Phra Siwichai was treated with tolerance and allowed to return to the north after he had signed an agreement that he would abide by the sangha rules and regulations.

Thereafter, this charismatic leader directed his efforts to raising imposing sums of money and engaging in the construction of bridges, roads, and temples, projects that he had already undertaken before. He is still known for the precipitous road he built to the historic shrine on the top of Doi Suthep, apparently characterized by poor engineering. He also engaged in remodeling and redecorating northern temples and embellishing their interiors with numerous self-portraits. I am tempted to say that here is a case of a monk engaging in activities traditionally associated with kingship! At least one writer has been moved to call these architectural efforts "ecclesiastical monstrosities" and "errors of taste" that "his followers still leave their fields to help construct" (Thompson, p. 643).

It is difficult to place and assess the events revolving around Phra Siwichai. It is abundantly clear that he was not the source of doctrinal schism; rather, he was charged with the disciplinary infractions against the *vinaya* code and ecclesiastical administrative laws. It is very likely that he was the focal point of a northern regional political and religious protest against the dominance of Bangkok, historically an upstart compared with the older northern kingdoms. Over and above these features, the popular following of the monk suggests the possibility of a spiritual leader, a *bhikkhu*, having a religious following that could at the same time serve as a political constituency and public. This realization was not lost on the government. (It was, however, only much later, in the early sixties in the Sarit era, that we find an example of the government interpreting a monk's popularity and following as a political threat – a case we shall deal with later in this chapter).

Apart from these northern events, there were other expressions of ferment and protest from within the sangha in the rest of the country that were in keeping with the political climate of the times. Some monks and novices became excited over the idea of a constitution for the regulation of wat affairs similar to the civil constitution, even going so far as to draw the analogy that the rulers of temples should be constitution-bound, even as the king.

Landon conveys to us a vivid picture of the turmoil of the *bhikkhus* at the time of the revolution in 1932:

> The new political ideas penetrated into the temple grounds in spite of the efforts of the leaders to keep the temples places of quiet, cut off from worldly affairs. Novices and young monks were sometimes requested not to leave the temple grounds during the periods of revolutionary activity. The pull was too great, however. The roads of Bangkok were dotted with yellow robes during the exciting days. Some temples forbade discussions of political subjects. There were people who suggested that a democratic form of government was needed in the temples as well as elsewhere. To this some of the head priests agreed. Many more objected . . . (1939, p. 216).

Thompson, another observer of the times, carries the story further:

> Among the welter of petitions that greeted the new regime were some monks asking for the transfer of certain provincial officials who had been approved by the church authorities. By September 1932 many monks had formed themselves into parties in order to do away with the control of the lord abbots. This threw the abbots, whose attitude towards the revolution had not crystallised until then, onto the side of the government, which in turn strengthened their position by protective legislation. That this did not entirely liquidate the movement among the monks was apparent when the patriarch ordered thirty-three monks to retire in January 1933 because they had tried to force their abbot to hand over his powers to them. In February 1935 a delegation representing some two thousand monks from twelve provinces arrived in Bangkok to petition the Premier to bring government control of the Buddhist church into line with the democratic regime. They also asked for equality of treatment for both the reformed and unreformed sects, a request that was not granted by the Assembly till 1938 (Thompson 1941, p. 642).

In the face of this challenge to ecclesiastical authority from below by young monks – and also of the challenge to authority represented by Phra Siwichai and his following – it is not surprising that the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries joined hands with the government in muzzling the political activity of monks. According to Thompson, the sangha authorities themselves in 1935 "persuaded the government to legislate the strengthening of internal discipline by refusing monks permission to participate in politics" (p. 643). In fact, a bill was defeated that would have permitted monks to become candidates for the Assembly. In the previous year (1934) the sangha authorities forbade monks from attending public entertainments under pain of being expelled from the sangha and from competing with laymen in certain work such as the act of healing. And in September 1937

they persuaded the minister of public instruction to forbid monks from participating in politics even to the extent of verbally supporting any candidates in the election.[10]

What can we learn from these events of the thirties? We realize that a change from absolute monarchy to an alleged constitutional form of government in which the center of power shifts from monarch to a portion of the people does not reflect a change in the deeper historical trend that strong governments always try to regulate certain features of sangha organization. The revolutionary governments were just as interested in purifying religion (not in its doctrinal features as in its economic and disciplinary organization) as many illustrious kings have done in their first flush of enthusiasm on mounting the throne.

Nevertheless, we have seen that the antiabsolutist, antiauthoritarian urges of the commoner-recruited emergent political public had their resonance within the ranks of the monks themselves, some of whom showed their antagonism to the powers of abbots and the official ecclesiastical hierarchy. But the dignitaries and the powers of the church squashed this challenge by allying with the political authorities. Thus it could be said that in the thirties, although there was a dramatic shift in the locus of power, the sangha dignitaries did not see these developments, and the attempted regulation of sangha administration by the state, as an important issue of sangha versus the state.

The sangha easily adapted itself to the new politics precisely because the new politicians did not question the sangha and the Buddhist religion in any fundamental sense; they were traditionalists as far as religion went, firmly believing that monks should not participate in politics and that the purity of the religion depended (as in the past) on the monks' obeying the *vinaya* rules and not indulging in abuses or immoral behavior. Most importantly, the abbots and elders of the sangha had not contested this thrust, nor given evidence of questioning the legitimacy or challenging the policies of the post-1932 governments. It is relevant to note that in accordance with recent Chakkri tradition, the supreme patriarch at the time of the revolution was Prince Jinavara, who until his death in 1937 did not directly engage in politics and is said to have consistently supported the government in power. Finally, as already stated in Chapter 11, the sangha participated during this time in the government's educational expansion program, providing many monks as teachers in government schools.

It is these events and developments that provide the setting and context for the 1941 sangha act that was promulgated by Premier Phibun, ostensibly as "an experiment to introduce the Buddhist order to the principles of democracy, e.g., the idea of the separation of administration, legislature and judicature" (Ishii 1968, p. 867). But as we have seen, the straight and narrow path of democracy had already deviated by 1938, and Phibun's willingness to tread it was dubious. Phibun, backed by his military faction,

[10] Thompson reports that in 1936 and 1938 two monks were involved in insurrection plots.

emerged as the most powerful politician in 1938, and his act of dissolving and reelecting the Assembly presaged the authoritarian features that would find their naked expression after the Japanese occupation in December 1941. But at the beginning of his premiership, he knew he had to tread carefully and was not in a position to eliminate the civilian politicians headed by Pridi. He needed time to consolidate his power and "he was shrewd enough to see that for the time being he had to play the democratic game and not shock a real opposition into existence" (Coast 1953, p. 13). Thus in Phibun's first cabinet of 1939 Pridi had the portfolio of finance, Khuang that of communications, Thamrong that of justice; and Nai Direk (a young Pridi supporter) became a deputy minister to Phibun himself (and later took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). It was in this phase of the pre-occupation politics that the Sangha Act of 1941 was passed.

The Provisions of the 1941 Act

One of the results of the revolutionary government's coming to terms with and an understanding with the sangha was its decision to democratize the ecclesiastical organization and bring it in line with the organizational arrangements of the political system. The act was passed by the king on the advice and consent of the Assembly of People's Representatives.

Before subjecting the act to a close scrutiny, let us first grasp its overall pattern. I can do no better for this purpose than to reproduce Ishii's organizational chart and a slightly revised version of his summary of the provisions (Figure 12.1):

1. The head of *khana song* is called *somdet phrasangkharaat*, or supreme patriarch, and was appointed by the king. His tenure of office is lifelong. *Sangkhasaphaa*, or the ecclesiastical assembly, the *khana sangkhamontrii*, or the ecclesiastical cabinet, and the *khana winaithon*, or ecclesiastical courts, correspond to the legislature, the administration, and the judiciary, respectively.

2. The ecclesiastical assembly was composed of 45 life-term members to be appointed by the supreme patriarch on the basis of seniority and other considerations of eligibility.[11]

3. The ecclesiastical cabinet was composed of the *sangkhanaayok*, corresponding to the premier, and the *sangkhamontrii*, or ecclesiastical ministers, all to be appointed by the supreme patriarch from among the members of the *sangkhasaphaa*. The ecclesiastical cabinet had charge of four departments called *ongkaan pokkhroong* (administration), *ongkaan suksaa* (education), *ongkaan phoeiphae* (propagation) and *ongkaan saathaaranupakaan* (public works).

4. For purposes of local ecclesiastical administration, the whole country

[11] According to the act (Article 11) the 45 members of this assembly were to be selected from titled monks of the rank of dharma upward and from scholar-monks who had the *phra khanacharya ek* and *phra parian ek* qualifications (Ishii's comment).

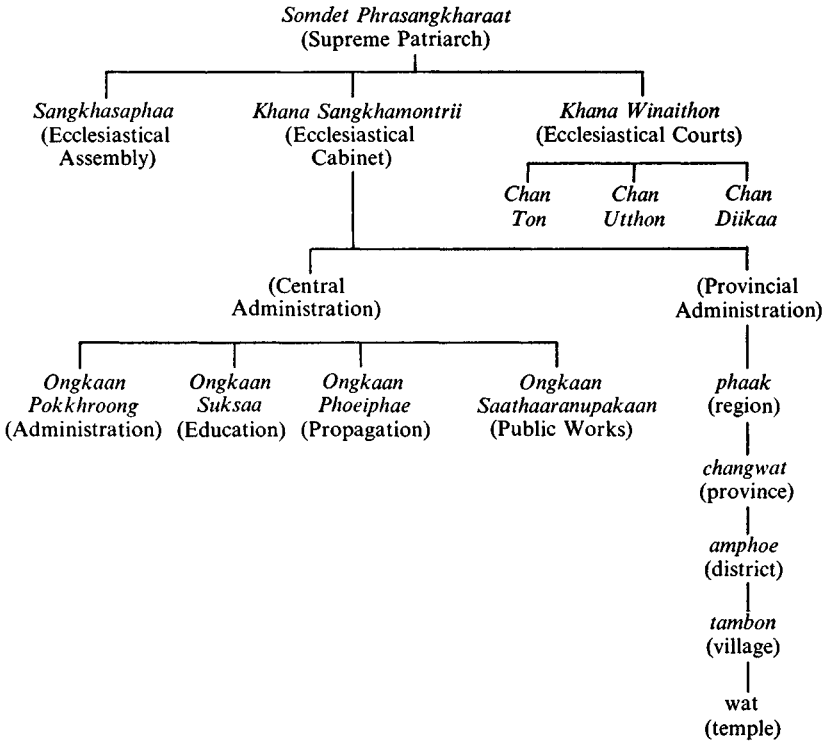


Figure 12.1. Organization of *Khana Song* of Thailand (The Buddhist Order Act), 1941.

was divided, parallel to civil administration, into 9 *phaak*, or regions, and 71 *changwat*, or provinces. Each province was further divided into *amphoe*, or districts, these consisting of *tambon*, or villages, each of which was constituted of *mun baan*, or hamlets, the minimum administrative unit. Each region, province, or district was controlled by an ecclesiastical committee headed by a *chao khana*, or chairman, while a *tambon* with a minimum of five monasteries had a *chao khana* who supervised the monasteries in its territory. The abbot was called *chao aawaat*.

5. The ecclesiastical courts consisted of *khana winaithon chan diikaa*, *khana winaithon chan utthon*, and *khana winaithon chan ton*, corresponding to the supreme court, the courts of appeal, and the courts of first instance, respectively.

We can now look at the relevant implications of the 1941 act in some detail. The themes I shall concentrate on are:

1. The attempted decentralization and democratization of the sangha to parallel the legislative, executive, and judicial institutions of the government and the various levels of the civil administration.

2. The firm linkage of the sangha with hoops of steel to the political au-

thority, which makes clear the latter's ultimate powers of regulation and control.

3. The further strengthening (as compared with the 1902 act) at the base of the powers of abbots of individual monasteries, especially with respect to control of property and of subordinate monks.

While the supreme patriarch of the sangha, appointed by the king, is said to enact regulations with the advice of the ecclesiastical assembly and to administer the *gana sangha* (*khana song*) through the ecclesiastical ministers according to the provisions of the act and with the advice of other ecclesiastical bodies and personnel, we may also note the provision that it is the minister of education "who shall take charge and control of the execution of this Act" (Article 4) and that it is the Department of Religious Affairs (located within the Ministry of Education) that "shall perform the duties of the office of the Secretary-General of the Sangha Sabha and the Gana Sangha Montri" (Article 59). In passing, we may also note that the minister of religious affairs in the 1902 act has been replaced by the minister of education as the immediate link of the sangha with the government. This change signifies a secularist shift on the part of the revolutionary government.

The interrelations of this dual pattern of authority shared between sangha and state, one wholly religious and the other wholly secular and political, can only be disentangled by attention to details. While the supreme patriarch is said to appoint the president and vice presidents of the Assembly "according to the resolution of the Sangha Sabha," these appointments had to be countersigned by the minister of education; again, while the patriarch normally convokes and closes sessions, he may also convoke a special session upon the request of the education minister. More importantly, the patriarch's withholding of his approval of draft laws submitted by the Assembly can, after two submissions, be overridden by the minister of education, who can himself submit the draft law to the president of the Assembly for legalization and execution.

The ecclesiastical council of ministers also could not have failed to appreciate the weighty formal powers allocated to the education minister: The patriarch's appointment of the ecclesiastical ministers had to be once again countersigned by this minister; furthermore, he was empowered, if necessary, to request the resignation of an ecclesiastical minister before the end of his term of office, normally lasting four years.

I shall refer shortly to the state's administration of the central *sasana* property. Here, as a final example of the state's assertion of its traditional rights to the purification of the Sangha, let me cite Articles 54 and 55, which say that false monks and deposed monks who do not submit to disrobing can be given up to six months' imprisonment and that anyone who may cause discredit and disunion (i.e., schism) in the sangha, is liable to imprisonment not exceeding one year. Article 56 threatens criminal action against any *vaiyavaccakara* (lay treasurer and accountant of a monastery's finances) who commits malfeasance in office.

While being subject in this manner to political control, the new ec-

clesiastical organization also reflects the structure of the post-1932 political authority and its system of civil administration. Thus, following the example of cabinet government, an ecclesiastical cabinet consisting of not more than nine ministers was appointed, at least four of whom were selected from the Assembly. And these ministers were to be the chief executives of four general departments: administration, education, propagation, and public works. The council of ministers enjoyed the sole powers of appointing (and removing) senior monks invested with the authority to ordain monks (*phra upacharya*), and monks to the various administrative positions in the provincial administrative hierarchy, ranging from the regional governor through the provincial and district governors to the *tambon* head. Presumably, as under the act of 1902, each higher level of office-holder was virtually responsible for selecting and/or appointing the officer of the next lower level. Furthermore, the act of 1941 makes no mention of the fourfold division of the sangha recognized in 1902, namely, the north, south, central divisions of the Mahanikai sect and the Thammayut sect and the ecclesiastical officers appointed to head them; but we know that this fourfold division of the sangha membership continued to operate.

We have noted that King Chulalongkorn's act of 1902 took care to recognize and strengthen the office of abbot as the head of individual monasteries. The 1941 act not only confirmed the disciplinary authority of the abbot over member monks and novices (particularly as regards giving permission to reside in the wat, expelling a resident for disobedience, and imposing punishments for infractions of *vinaya* and sangha rules) but also recognized his powers "to maintain, take care of and manage the monastery and the properties thereof . . ." according to the sangha's regulations and laws (Article 43). The rights to manage the property of the wat refer to those categories already recognized in 1902: *thiwat* (monastery estate), *thorani sangha* (property owned outside the wat), and *kalapana* property (revenue estate). However, that category of monastic property that did not belong to individual monasteries and was therefore labeled as "central *sasana* property" was placed under the management and control of the Ministry of Education (the Department of Religious Affairs), which was assigned the task of drawing an annual budget related to these properties, and implementing it upon securing its approval by the ecclesiastical council of ministers.

The Act of 1963

Twenty-two years after the coming into effect of the 1941 act, Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand, virtually a military dictator, on the basis of allegations that there was internal discord in the sangha, issued on October 28, 1960, "A high-handed statement that the government was ready to intervene in the affairs of the Buddhist Church at its request to settle the dispute" (Ishii 1968, p. 869). Subsequently, the Sarit administration en-

acted the Buddhist Order Act at the end of 1962 with the explicit and avowed purpose of reforming the ecclesiastical organization and establishing a strong leadership in the sangha.

This new act had two conspicuous features: it constituted a denial of the ideas of democracy, separation of powers and checks and balances as embodied in the previous act, and it centralized and concentrated power in the person of a single person, the supreme patriarch; secondly, it abolished all the institutional organs established by the previous act, which enjoyed certain real powers of legislation, execution, and adjudication, namely, the ecclesiastical assembly, the ecclesiastical council of ministers, and the ecclesiastical courts, and replaced them with a weak advisory body to the patriarch called the *Mahatherasamakhom* (Council of Elders).

This shift away from whatever democratic features had previously existed in the sangha organization toward an authoritarian concentration of power in the person of the patriarch can be discussed at two levels. It can be placed in the context of wider politics whereby – except for the postwar interlude from 1944 to 1947, when Phibul was in temporary disgrace and Pridi and the Free Thai movement politicians were in power – Thailand progressively deviated from its ambiguous 1932 democratic aspirations and moved toward an army-backed authoritarianism, first under Phibul, who was rehabilitated from 1950 onward, and then under his successor, Sarit, who attained a more full-blown absolutism, which combined an emphasis on national development and integration with an intensified use of the traditional symbols of king and Buddhism.

The shift in sangha organization embodied by the 1963 act can also be seen in the more particularistic context of factionalism and disputes that developed internally within the sangha, particularly between its two constituent sects, and which were interpreted by the Sarit regime as the disruptive consequences of the democratic provisions of the previous 1941 act.

The note attached to the new act made no bones about its rejection of democratic features in sangha organization. The note said:

> The reason for enactment of this Act is that the administration of the Buddhist Church is not a matter to be based upon the principle of separation of powers for the sake of balance among them as is the case under the current law. Such a system is an obstacle to effective administration. It is therefore appropriate to amend the existing law so that the Supreme Patriarch, head of the ecclesiastical community, can command the order through the Council of Elders in accordance with both the civil law and the Buddhist disciplines, thereby promoting the progress and prosperity of Buddhism.[12]

The act made the patriarch the ex-officio president of the Council of Elders. This council was to consist of, besides the patriarch, every senior monk who had the title of *sondet* grade in the capacity of ex-officio member, and of four to eight monks of *racha khana* status who were to be *ap-*

[12] This translation of the note by Ishii is superior to the translation in the *Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha*, 1963.

pointed by the patriarch for a period of two years. These appointed monks may be reappointed and can be dismissed by patriarchal command. But note that these appointments and dismissals must be countersigned by the minister of education.

The act kept intact the provincial hierarchical administration ranging from region (*phak*), province (*changwat*), and district (*amphur*) to commune (*tambon*). In fact, this system, paralleling the civil administrative structure, has been further elaborated in ensuing years, as we shall see later. The act also maintained the previous link between state and sangha by making the director general of the Department of Religious Affairs the ex-officio secretary general of the Council of Elders, and the department itself the office of the Council of Elders. An unmistakable feature of the act was its preoccupation with the problem of enforced disrobing of monks for what appears to be political reasons of state. Several articles (e.g., Articles 25–28) assert the power of the Council of Elders to disrobe and punish monks, but the most important of them was Article 29, which states:

> In the event that a Bhikkhu is accused of a crime and is arrested, the police authority is vested with the power to disrobe him, provided that the investigation officer of the police or the public prosecutor deems it advisable to hold him in confinement for the time being and the abbot of the monastery where he lives refuses to put him under control or that the investigating officer (of the police) thinks it inadvisable to put him under the charge of the abbot or that the Bhikkhu is not attached to any monastery.

What lies behind this sinister threat that the police can forcibly disrobe and confine monks?

Before we comment on the particular events that prompted this drastic act that signals the political regulation of the sangha to an unprecedented degree, let me make a general comment on the congruence of the three Sangha Acts of 1902, 1941, and 1963 with the respective political systems of their time. King Chulalongkorn's act reflected the political system of his day: the absolute king was also the head of the sangha; and he explicitly recognized that he was introducing "rational bureaucracy" into the system of sangha administration to keep up with changes in the system of civil administration. We have already noted how this act brought the sangha into closer relation with the political authority – indeed, one could say that the act formalized a hierarchical network that was devised in the course of implementing the primary-education program and a policy of national political integration, and that it gave expression to a fair measure of effective regulation of the sangha achieved by the political authority.

The second act, of 1941, faithfully reflects the change of the Thai political system from absolute monarchy to an alleged constitutional democracy; it marks the adaptation to each other and the understanding forged between the revolutionary politicians and the sangha. And now the third act, of 1963, corresponds to the shift once again back to absolution under military

dictatorship. Just as power now in the political system is concentrated in one person, so is it also concentrated in one person in the religious system, who is made to owe exclusive allegiance to the former; the political logic of this shift is the political dictatorship's attempt to stamp out any possible threat to its supremacy and monopoly of power.

Marshal Sarit's coup d'état took place on September 16, 1957. It resulted in the dissolution of the old constitution and Sarit's despotic rule as head of the revolutionary party during the interim period before a new constitution could be devised. Sarit's concern was with national development (*kaan phatthana pratheet*) and national integration rather than with democracy. And he appreciated very well that Buddhism and monarchy were important traditional institutions that would enhance the achievement of his political aims. Thus Sarit's policy of creating a strong and loyal sangha went hand in hand with his active promotion of the ceremonial role of kingship as a vehicle for promoting national pride, unity, and identity. The political climate of the thirties that achieved the paring down of the king's powers was also tepid toward the staging of royal rites that dramatized the divinity of the king and his role in maintaining the prosperity and stability of his country. But, now, with a change in climate again, traditional ceremonies, such as *raek na* (first ploughing), have been revived; the king now leads the oath of allegiance ceremony transformed to express loyalty to the country (rather than to himself); he not only conscientiously conducts the presentation of *kathin* gifts to selected royal wat at the end of Lent, but also installs high ecclesiastical monks in office by handing to them the fan and other insignia of office; he also similarly gives ceremonial recognition to Pali *parian* scholars of the highest grade, and if they are novices, sponsors their ordination.

These examples pertain to religion; but, of course, more numerous than those relating to the sangha are the king's ceremonial functions with regard to affairs of state. We may include here the intensified investing of traditional titles (*phya, luang, phra, khun*) on citizens in recognition of their services to the country.

Now to inquire into the particular reasons why an act was passed in 1963. Was the sangha suffering from discord? Why did the act baldly state that secular law officers could actually incarcerate and disrobe disobedient monks? That the sangha was internally riven by the rivalries between the majority Mahanikai sect and the minority, but politically favored, Thammayut sect is certain; furthermore, that this cleavage is intimately linked with the rivalry and jealousy between two able and ambitious monks holding high office, each belonging to one of the two sects is also certain. These cleavages and rivalries within the sangha also apparently became translated into wider political terms, so that Field Marshal Sarit felt able to impute politically subversive characteristics to the sangha's schism.

The 1941 act by the very act of diversifying the organs of sangha administration created numerous ecclesiastical positions of prestige and influ-

ence – the most important of which were ecclesiastical councils of ministers and their deputies. In imitation of cabinet government and ministries of state, the sangha, too, had its prime minister (*sanghanayok*) and other ministers in charge of ministries and departments. Now, in implementing the provinces of the act, the internal politics of the sangha dictated the equal sharing of the cabinet positions on a parity basis by the two sects – Mahanikai and Thammayut. Thus the offices of ministers and their deputies were allocated equally so that a Mahanikai minister and a Thammayut deputy, or vice versa, were always paired.

Despite the fact that the Thammayut is a minority sect (e.g., in 1963 the number of Mahanikai wat in the country was 23,580, while the Thammayut wat numbered 1,054; in 1968 the comparative numbers were 24,029 and 1,087 for wat, 175,380 and 9,493 for monks),[13] we have already seen how since the time of King Mongkut, and subsequently during the headship of the sect by Prince Wachirayan, this sect played a dominant role in the country's educational development and religious achievements.

Let us take a glance backward to understand better the basis of Thammayut strength in the Thai sangha. The sect's very schismatic sponsorship by a prince who later became king and its very active leadership in the implementing of the primary-education program and attendant advocacy of a national sangha hierarchy sowed seeds of discord together with seeds of fruitfulness.

When Mongkut became king, he tried to defuse the issue about the correct style of wearing the robe by declaring that monks were free to choose either style. But the Thammayut sect, although still a minority sect, had continued to recruit monks of princely and aristocratic connections, and its royalist membership was reciprocated with official support and a status independent of and equal to the Mahanikai in the organization of the sangha. Since King Chulalongkorn's time the office of supreme patriarch

[13] Although a minority sect, the Thammayut numbers have grown vis-à-vis the Mahanikai as, for example, illustrated by the following table:

Development of the Thammayut Chapter Within the Thai Sangha from 1927–1966

Year	Temples	Monks	Novices	Thammayut Monks During *Phansa*	All Monks During *Phansa*
1927	186	3047	1817	1	42.2
1937	272	4672	2122	1	31.9
1959	819	9892	5499	1	15.9
1963	920	7915	4226	1	19.1
1966	1023	8807	4448	1	20.0

Source: Mulder (1969).

has been held more often by Thammayut than by Mahanikai monks,[14] many being of princely birth (e.g., Pavaret, Wachirayan, Jinavara). And the Thammayut sect has undoubtedly enjoyed up to this day the patronage of the aristocracy and high officials. The present king again revalidated its status by being ordained a Thammayut monk for a brief period.

The Thammayut sect, partly because of its small size, has over time maintained stricter disciplinary standards and a greater unity as a pressure group than the much larger, flabbier, and less united Mahanikai sect. And ever since Wachirayan's Thammayut elite monks dominated the sangha's drive toward a national hierarchy, the Thammayut *nikai* has shown evidence of greater political experience, astuteness, and collaboration. But even as early as 1899 Prince Damrong warned Wachirayan about the dangers of placing too many Thammayut monks in supervisory positions over Mahanikai monasteries and recommended a more conciliatory approach in his relations to the older and larger sect (C. Reynolds 1972, p. 248). But Wachirayan apparently was convinced of the superior ability and conduct of his own monks and was of the opinion that the Mahanikai were incapable of governing themselves.

To return to the results of the 1941 act: The division of offices, influence, and spoils between the two sects inevitably created tensions and rivalries in the conduct of the sangha's affairs. These differences were eventually crystallized in a struggle between two monks.

An educated ex-Thammayut monk who was in robes at the time gave the following account of the troubled period:

Account 1

The story begins in the fifties. At that time the supreme patriarch, Somdet Phrawachirayanawong, was a prince, the abbot of Wat Bowonniwet, a Thammayut sect wat, and the ordainer of the king himself. This patriarch appointed Somdet Phrawannarat, the Mahanikai abbot of Wat Benchamabopit, as the prime minister of the sangha (*sanghanayok*).

In due course when the patriarch died, Somdet Phrawannarat, the prime minister, was appointed as the patriarch, his name being elevated to Somdet Phra Ariyawongsakatayan. (This monk was in fact promoted as patriarch in preference to another Mahanikai monk, Somdet Buddha Kosachaan, abbot of Wat Sraket, who was then president of the council of ministers, who though of lower rank than the other candidate was his senior in service).

The new patriarch in turn appointed a Thammayut monk, Somdet Phramahawirawong, abbot of Wat Mongkut, as his prime minister. This is a powerful position, and the appointment is said to have caused disagreement within the Mahanikai sect. At this time the patriarch himself was the head of the Mahanikai, while Somdet Phramahawirawong was the head of the Thammayut.

My informant described the Thammayut prime minister as able and popular; nevertheless, anonymous letters and leaflets directed against both the patriarch

[14] More recently, the supreme patriarch who died in 1971 was a Thammayut (of commoner birth); he was briefly followed by a Mahanikai successor in 1972, who has been followed again by a Thammayut holder (commoner).

and the prime minister began to circulate. Soon the differences and clashes between the Mahanikai and Thammayut sects spread far and wide in the country, creating conflict of loyalty even within monasteries, especially of the Mahanikai sect.[15]

When the sangha was threatened with this schism, Field Marshal Sarit and his cabinet decided to intervene. Although there was no firm evidence, they accused Phra Pimolatham, abbot of Bangkok's famous Mahanikai Wat Mahathad, the ecclesiastical minister of the interior, as the instigator of the letters and leaflets.

According to my informant, Phra Pimolatham's political position as regards the sangha's schism was not clear. He had made his reputation as the popularizer throughout the country of meditation (*wiphasana/vipassana*). He had traveled widely abroad and had become involved with the Moral Rearmament movement (MRA).

Sarit's introduction of the 1963 act went hand in hand with the prosecution of Phra Pimolatham. Several anonymous leaflets had circulated accusing Phra Pimolatham as the originator of the crisis. In the court prosecution the monk was accused of "impropriety" in dress – the reference being to the fact that the monk had gone down into a mine in Germany wearing a helmet and protective garments, this being construed as assumption of lay costume, which is prohibited by the *vinaya* code. Phra Pimolatham was found guilty by the court, and the sangha ordered him to disrobe. He refused, however, protesting his innocence. The police then forcibly disrobed him and put him in jail, where wearing white robes, the prisoner insisted on leading a monk's life in accordance with the *vinaya* rules. In subsequent years, after the death of Field Marshal Sarit, the supreme court cleared the incarcerated and defrocked monk, who has now returned to Wat Mahathad and leads the life of an ordinary monk, shorn of his titles and offices.

In the meantime Phra Pimolatham's rival Phramahawirawong bided his time and became supreme patriarch in succession to the abbot of Wat Sraket, who, being old, held office only for a short period of time as successor to Somdet Phra Ariyawongsakatayan. But he too died in 1971 as a result of a motor accident.

The rivalry between Phra Pimolatham and Phramahawirawong and the subsequent victimization of the former were described to me in 1971 in slightly different terms by a monk of the Mahanikai sect who was favorably disposed toward the defrocked monk.

Account 2

Phra Pimolatham once went on a tour sponsored by the Moral Rearmament group, and somewhere in eastern Europe(?) he went down into a mine wearing

[15] Although my informant did not spell it out, it appears that these differences between the factional sects actually came to a head in 1958 when the supreme patriarch died. According to Ishii: "The perennial confrontation between the two factions was aggravated particularly by the Supreme Patriarch's death in 1958 and the necessity to appoint his successor. This almost developed into a secular issue through the circulation of irresponsible documents. The Buddhist Church's administrative setup was not so constituted as to invite strong leadership to cope with the situation, and the tensions continued" (1968, p. 868). The election actually went in favor of the aged abbot of Wat Sraket, who died not long afterward, to leave the field free for the abbot of Wat Mongkut.

the usual protection gear. (He was not the first to do this; another Thai monk, famed for this preaching, had already set a precedent.)

After his return, Phra Pimolatham launched his drive to popularize meditation (*kammathan*).

The root cause of the alleged schism was the competition and disagreement between the abbot of Wat Mahathad and the abbot of Wat Mongkut, the present patriarch. They were at one time close friends, but they fell apart "because two lions cannot live in the same cave." They were both important members of the *Mahatherasamakhom* (Council of Elders). Because the abbot of Wat Mongkut could not defeat his rival, he connived at a smear campaign of painting Phra Pimolatham as a breaker of *vinai* discipline and a Communist. And Field Marshal Sarit because of his anti-Communist mania became directly involved in the accusation and trial of the monk. The trial was oblique and indirect in its accusations. At the end of it Phra Pimolatham was defrocked and put into prison, but since Sarit's death the supreme court has rehabilitated him – he is at present an ordinary old monk in Wat Mahathad, a *phra luang ta* without titles.

The abbot of Wat Mongkut has enjoyed the strong support of the government, particularly Sarit. Although he was a candidate for the office of patriarch when Somdet Phra Ariyawongsakatayan died, he lost that election to the abbot of Wat Sraket, who was his senior; but the next time around he achieved his life's ambition.

While one cannot deny that the rivalry between the two sects over the exercise of power within the sangha – a rivalry that took concrete shape in the alleged tussle between two ambitious monks – produced discord in the sangha, a discord that the sangha was unable to deal with and therefore invited action from the heavy hand of Sarit, there is probably another reason why Phra Pimolatham was the target of Sarit's disciplinary action.

It was Phra Pimolatham, significantly the ecclesiastical minister of the interior (the interior minister is the single most powerful minister next to the prime minister in the Thai secular political system), who initiated a country-wide religious program that by its very success threatened to become a base of power inaccessible to the secular authorities and potentially in competition with their own power. We can surmise that whenever the sangha threatens to become an independent power base, the political authority would seek to curb it.

It was around 1955 that Wat Mahathad under the leadership of Phra Pimolatham became the center for the dissemination of meditation (*vipassana* or *kammathan*). Phra Pimolatham had himself been influenced in the practice of this spiritual technique by virtue of his contacts with some Burmese monasteries, which have traditionally been famous for the propagation of meditation techniques and other spiritual exercises. We cannot here go into the theory and techniques of meditation: Suffice it to say that its promotion is based on the fact that learning (*pariyathi*) by itself is insufficient without practice (*prathipathi*), that the practice of spiritual exercises of concentration, meditation, and the emptying of mind leads to the realization of wisdom (*pañña*), the seeing of things as

they truly are, and liberation, and that the practice of meditation is *not merely for monks but for laymen as well.*

The kind of popularization and propagation of *vipassana* advocated by Phra Pimolatham as the minister of the interior in the council of ministers involved not so much the setting up of forest hermitages populated by monks who have retreated from the world but its enthusiastic observance by numerous urban and village wat, wherein, apart from monks practicing meditation, there would be nuns and, more importantly, pious laymen of all ages and occupations undergoing spiritual exercises to find relief from worldly cares and burdens.

Wat Mahathad as the center of propagation influenced numerous wat in the capital itself; but even more importantly enthusiastic abbots and monks from the provinces were invited to Wat Mahathad to learn the techniques and to return and set up their own centers in their wat. In order that the practice could develop fast and in order that laymen may enjoy the benefits of meditation quickly, a "crash course" in meditation, so to say, was developed. Many monks visited Burmese monasteries to further their practice of meditation. Several meditation centers were established in the north, particularly in Chiangmai province, in the north-east and in the south. The participation of laymen appears to have been impressive; in time the laymen participating in the exercises were more numerous than the monks.

The meditation program suffered a severe setback with Phra Pimolatham's prosecution and incarceration in 1963. The program, however, did not die out; today Phra Thepsiddhimuni carries on the propagation as Phra Pimolatham's successor; and there still exist many wat in the provinces, particularly in the north, that carry on the work they began under Phra Pimolatham's inspiration.

We can now surmise why this popular program and the influence wielded by the monk sponsoring it might have been construed as a political threat by Sarit and his military colleagues. It is clear that the program served as a basis for mashaling the support and loyalty of several monks and laymen. Most importantly, that *political* power was grounded theoretically in a monk's *spiritual* excellence and *religious* achievement. This source and basis of power were inaccessible to lay politicians and soldiers whose power rested on the control of physical force. Insofar as there exist mechanisms within the sangha for generating a collective support in society that can be claimed to be independent of and immune to naked political power, the political authority will seek to curb them. This is indeed why Sarit would and did try to taint Pimolatham's activities as "politically subversive"; and this is indeed why a seemingly religious project for the revitalization of religion could be branded as a "political" attempt to amass power dangerous to the regime.

But when the sangha lends its religious weight to the championing of a political program that legitimates the political authority and seeks to

strengthen it further, then, of course, the political authority is likely to appreciate and reward the sangha's spiritual excellence. This we will see later is precisely the case with the *thammathud* program, which consists of monks actively participating in the promotion of community welfare and national development.

The 1963 act weakened the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council in important ways, primarily through centralizing power in the hands of the patriarch and, correspondingly, dissolving the previous scheme whereby authority and administrative activities were divided among the ecclesiastical ministers and the Assembly. We shall illustrate this weakening in Chapter 16.

PART TWO

13. The Composition and Distribution of Religious Personnel: What the Figures Say

When we talk about the monastic institutions, monks, and novices of Thailand, what kind of numbers are involved? According to estimates provided by the Manpower Planning Division of the National Economic Development Board of Thailand, the population in Thailand in April 1970 was 36,032,000, 17,938,000 of who were males, 18,094,000 females (see Table 13.1). In 1968 the estimated population was 33,855,000. For that year we have the following statistics during *phansa* (Lent) relating to wat and their ordained inmates: 25,116 wats, 184,873 monks, 108,504 novices.

Table 13.1. *Estimated (adjusted) regional distribution of population* 1970*

Region	Male	Female	Total population	
			Number	Percentage distribution
Central	5,617,000	5,715,000	11,332,000	31.45
Northeastern	6,213,000	6,286,000	12,499,000	34.69
Northern**	3,880,000	3,883,000	7,763,000	21.55
Southern	2,228,000	2,210,000	4,438,000	12.31
Whole kingdom	17,938,000	18,094,000	36,032,000	100.00

Source: National Economic Development Board, Manpower Planning Division, April figures.

* The figures provided by the National Population and Housing Census (1970) published recently only differ slightly from the NEDB estimates: The population of the whole kingdom is 34,397,394, and the percentage regional distributions (the regions being classified in the same way as the NEDB) are 30.8 percent for the central region, 34.9 percent for the northeastern, 21.9 percent for the northern and 12.4 percent for the southern.

I shall continue to use the foregoing NEDB figures because I also employ other distributions provided by them in other tables.

** The NEDB calculations include in the northern category regions 5 and 6 made up of the following provinces, which others (including myself) on the basis of cultural, dialectical, and historical criteria would include in the central region: Kamphaengphet, Tak, Nakhon Sawan, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Petchabun, Sukhothai, Uttaradit, Uthai Thani. In my own case, when I refer to the north, I include only the 6 provinces that form regions 6 and 7, namely, Chiangmai, Lampang, Phrae, Nan, Lamphun, Maehongson.

Proportions calculated from these crude data would show that monks during the Lent of 1968 represented about 0.5 percent of the total population, and 1 percent of the male population; novices represented about 0.3 percent of the total population and 0.6 percent of the male population, and *both* monks and novices represented 0.9 percent of the total population and 1.8 percent of the male population (see Table 13.2).

Admittedly, these figures scale down when we take into account the fact that ordination of young men for one Lenten session is a popular institution and that in the total number of monks reported (during Lent) in any one year about 25 percent could be classed as temporary monks.[1]

Table 13.2. *Number of temples, monks, and novices in Thailand, 1960–1969*

Year	Estimated total population of Thailand	Number of temples	Number of monks	Number of novices	Total monks and novices
1960	26,499,000	22,639	159,701	95,838	255,539
1961	27,309,000	22,120	152,787	87,335	240,122
1962	28,152,000	23,322	151,560	85,260	236,820
1963	29,027,000	23,184	150,685	83,772	234,407
1964	29,933,000	23,539	166,680	85,873	252,553
1965	30,870,000	23,700	173,126	88,251	261,377
1966	31,847,000	24,105	175,266	87,661	262,927
1967	32,855,000	24,634	185,921	96,569	282,490
1968	33,855,000	25,116	184,873	108,504	293,377
1969	34,947,000	25,292	189,887	114,927	304,814

Source: (1) Total population, Manpower Planning Division of the NEDB, estimated for April of each year. (2) Number of temples and monks and novices, Annual Report of Religious Activities (The Department of Religious Affairs), for the years 1967 (B.E. 2513), 1968 (B.E. 2511), and 1969 (B.E. 2512). Approximate figures were estimated by the following method: During the Lenten season each abbot of a temple is required to send returns (taken toward the end of September) regarding the number of monks, novices, nuns, and lay students at his wat to the provincial (via the district) ecclesiastical authority, from whom the data are collected and tabulated by the Department of Religious Affairs in Bangkok. The statistics include temporary monks and novices and are collected when the religious population is at its maximum.

A more informative set of calculations is provided by Mulder (1969, p. 35) and reproduced in Table 13.3. From these figures Mulder drew the following conclusion:

it appears that from 1927 to 1966 the number of *wats* increased 45.5% and the total population increased 178.2%, while the number of monks during *Phansaa* increased only 35.1%. The ratio of monks, during Phansaa, among the adult Buddhist male population deteriorated from 1 : 16.5 to 1 : 34.1 while

[1] Thus in 1966 of a total of 175,266 monks, 42,101 (24%) were listed as temporary (Mulder 1969, p. 34). The Annual Report for 1969 states that of a total of approximately 187,763 monks, 24.6 percent (46,249) were "temporary" monks.

Table 13.3. *Statistics on temples, monks, and novices during* Phansa, *total population, adult Buddhist males, and the ratio of monks during* Phansa *among the adult Buddhist male population, 1927–1966*

Year	Temples	Monks	Novices	Population	Adult Buddhist males	Monks during *Phansa*	Adult Buddhist males
1927	16,503	129,698	83,345	11,500,000	2,150,000	1	16.5
1937	17,592	149,146	70,800	14,700,000	2,750,000	1	18.4
1959	21,380	157,113	92,442	25,500,000	4,770,000	1	30.4
1963	23,322	151,560	85,260	28,500,000	5,330,000	1	37.0
1966	24,104	175,266	87,661	32,000,000	5,964,000	1	34.1

Source: Mulder (1969), p. 35, Table 3. The statistics were obtained from the Department of Religious Affairs, Bangkok, for the years 1927, 1937, and 1959 as quoted by K. E. Wells, *Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Activities* (Bangkok, 1960), p. 26. For the years 1963 and 1966 the statistics were obtained from *Raajingaam Kaansaasanaa Pracampii* 2056 and 2509 [Annual Reports of Religion Activities for 1963 and 1967] (Bangkok: Kromkaansaasanaa Krasuang Syksanthikaan, 1965 and 1968), pp. 104–113; 85–107. Also population figures and characteristics are on the basis of the adjusted 1960 census results as advised by The Population Research and Training Center, Chulalongkorn University.

it also appears that at present the permanent monkhood numbers slightly over 2% of the adult Buddhist male population (p. 35).

What kind of conclusions can we draw from these statistics about the state of Buddhism in contemporary Thailand? The decline of Buddhism or its flourishing? The remarkable fact is that in the past few decades, as the country has been opened up more *pari passu* with a dramatic increase in population, as more roads have been built and more urban-type settlements formed, as more villages and hamlets lacking wat have emulated those that possess them, the actual number of wat newly built or renovated has shown a substantial increase. So have the number of monastic schools teaching Pali and dhamma. But, paradoxically, the number of religious inmates of these wat, monks and novices, seems to have declined in relation to the total population and the male population. Does this latter feature signify that the sangha (monastic order) is in some danger of decline in its numbers while the reverence for Buddhism as such on the part of the lay population remains unabated or indeed has escalated? This may well be the case, but I for one see "Buddhism," crudely measured in terms of ritual activity, beliefs, ideology, practices, gift giving, material support of monasteries and religious personnel, on the part of both laymen and government, as *expanding* and keeping pace with modernization, urbanization, nationalization, and rising expectations. I should like to argue that the practice of and the commitment to Buddhism have not diminished in the face of the enlargement of commercial and industrial segments of the

population, both bourgeois and proletarian, and the increasing pull of remote villages into the field of influence of urban cultural values and lifestyles. In Thailand at least modernization and economic development spell not the demise of religious action labeled "Buddhism" but probably its intensification.

Landon, writing of the Siam in translation of the 1930s (1939), made this evaluation of trends then prevailing. Citing Prince Varnavaidyakava's judgment in 1933 that Buddhism was not losing ground as judged by temple attendance and lay meritorious works, Landon remarked that "the constant mention of religious rites and ceremonies in newspapers" would seem to support the prince's conclusion. "The seasonal festivities," he noted, "yield much pleasure and satisfy the fun loving nature of the Siamese, but in addition they are definitely religious." The strength of Buddhism, judged by these criteria, has not diminished 30 years later.

Landon backed these impressions with some hard facts: From 1932 to 1937 about 300 monasteries were added to the previous number, making a total of 17,408; assuming that Siam had 14.5 million people, that allowed approximately one monastery to every 800 people. Further, noting that during the same period the number of monks rose about 15,000 to a total of 150,213 and that the novices remained stable at 75,079 he inferred that "Siamese Buddhism seems to have grown to match the normal expansion of Buddhism."

Finally Landon directed our attention to the expansion of monastic education; in the seven years between 1929–1930 and 1936–1937 the number of Pali schools had nearly doubled (from 197 to 391), and so had the dhamma (*naktham*) schools (from 2,195 to 4,056). But while the dhamma students showed a corresponding increase (from 38,434 to 69,357), the Pali student body had only increased by one-fifth (from 7,846 to 9,551). The figures indicate, he said, an active interest in Buddhist studies (pp. 208–209).

What is the situation in the late sixties if we take these indexes? While affirming, as noted in the thirties, the expanding trend in monastic education as judged by schools, we cannot confirm the calculation that the recruitment of religious personnel has kept pace with population increase.

It is true, as Mulder shows, that the number of religious personnel, especially monks and novices, shows a decrease over time proportional to the total (male Buddhist) population. This decline signifies not so much a loss of faith among Thai youth as that, in recent decades, government-(and privately) provided secular education has dramatically expanded and become accessible to larger numbers of the rural (and urban) population, thereby making it increasingly unnecessary for these same youth to have to undergo ordination as novices or monks in pursuance of their education. In other words, in the past, particularly for most of the poor segments of the rural population, the monastic schools were the only available means

for pursuing education and literacy beyond the primary grades. Able, intelligent, keen young peasant boys became studious novices and in due course found their way to the more important monasteries that had better schools. There they were ordained monks and pursued their education still further. Many of them disrobed at the completion of their education to enter lay society as educated, literate men, occupying positions higher than those into which they were born or their fathers occupied, but many also continued as monks without converting to lay status.

The proportional decrease in monks and novices today in relation to the total (male) population is mainly a result then of the increasing availability of modern secular education. But still there exist poor families that cannot afford to educate their sons in the secular schools, because secondary and tertiary education entail various kinds of expenditure. Most villages today do not have secondary schools, and parents must arrange for accommodation for their sons while they study in the places where these schools are located; they must also pay for books and clothing in addition to a certain amount of fees. While not by any means denying that many youth may wish to be ordained novices or monks primarily or partly for religious reasons, I also wish to emphasize that monastic establishments and temple complexes – called wat – continue to attract youth because of the intellectual and moral education they provide and that the commitment to the monks' vocation is more often a consequence of the novice's experience of living in the wat rather than an antecedent feature prompting ordination.

But if the career of monk or novice is linked to education, then those who choose education must spend a fairly lengthy period of time in robes. This correlation then makes it necessary for us not only to separate temporary monks (usually called *navaga*) from longer-serving monks but also to distinguish between the composition and size of rural wat from urban wat, particularly those wat that are nodes in the country's administrative and educational network.

It is easier for our purposes here to deal with this comparison in simplified terms as one between village and urban wat (while remembering that there also exist large wat in many rural locations, away from towns). Two basic characteristics usually distinguish the majority of rural wat from urban wat: Rural wat are not only small-sized with respect to personnel, but also the majority of their monks (but not novices) are temporary inmates, ordained for one Lent only (or slightly longer). In contrast urban wat are not only larger, but the majority of monks residing in them (say two-thirds) tend to be those who have had many years of service as novices first and then monks later and are, therefore, sharply distinguished from the temporary *navaga* monks who don robes for one *phansa*.

The situation of the novices is different for most of Thailand except the north. While a certain number of young boys may undergo temporary

novicehood (of a few weeks) to make merit for dead parents or grandparents, novices by and large stay in robes for a certain period of time because they ordinarily become ordained in order to acquire education. In the northern provinces such as Chiangmai and Chiangrai the pattern was more or less reversed in the past in that the traditional custom was for many young boys to undergo *temporary* novicehood and to reserve ordination to monkhood for those who had serious intentions of following the religious path for at least some length of time.

There is another factor that is related to size of wat. As a rule of thumb it is true to say that a royal wat (*wat luang*) tends to be larger than a commoner wat (*wat raad*). Royal wat are those that have historically been founded by royalty or nobility and given royal recognition. In fact prestigious commoner wat, their prestige deriving from their large size and/or from historical claims, can petition to be upgraded as royal wat, and this process again helps royal wat to be larger than those of commoner status. While in the past royal wat enjoyed royal endowments and gifts, today the chief prerogatives of being *wat luang* are that the king or his representative must present it with the annual *kathin* gift at the end of Lent and that certain high ecclesiastical titles are reserved for monks residing in them. While *wat luang* tend to be famous, large, and older and to enjoy the support of aristocrats, top officials, and famous patrons, *wat raad* tend to be more recently established and smaller and to be supported by the ordinary people (although they too can have wealthy and famous patrons).

In 1968 there were 161 royal temples,[2] of which 78 were located in the capital city (Bangkok having 35 and Thonburi 43). Thus a little less than one-half are located in the metropolis that boasts the largest monastic communities. The remaining royal wat seem to be fairly widely distributed throughout the country.

Urban-Rural Demographic and Monastic Distributions

In order to grasp the framework of the country-wide monastic system, it is first necessary to have some idea of rural and urban distributions throughout the country. The quantitative data being what they are, our calculations must perforce be crude. I rely on estimates made by the Manpower Planning Division of the National Planning Division of the National Economic Development Board.

Assuming that in Thailand municipalities can, without too much distortion, be equated with urban collectivities, we can derive the following picture (see Table 13.4). Of the kingdom's estimated total population in

[2] Royal temples are graded into different classes, the major ones (and their numbers) being *ek* (22), *tho* (42), and *thri* (97).

Table 13.4. *Municipal and rural distributions of population by sex, 1970*

	Total population	Percent	Male population	Percent	Female population	Percent
Municipal	5,200,023	14.63	2,658,234	14.85	2,541,789	14.40
Rural	30,350,082	85.37	15,239,649	85.15	15,110,433	85.60
Whole kingdom	35,550,105	100	17,897,883	100	17,652,222	100

Source: same as Table 13.1.

1970 of 35,550,105, 85.37 percent (30,350,082) can be classified as rural, 14.63 percent as living in municipalities. There are in all 71 municipalities in Thailand: 26 located in the central region, 15 in the northeast, 14 in the southern region, and 16 in the north. The most important feature of the rural-urban distribution is the dominance of the central region, and within this of the capital city of Bangkok-Thonburi (see Tables 13.5 and 13.6).

Thus some 71.13 percent of a total population of about 5 million living in municipalities is concentrated in the central region, with each of the other three regions containing 9 to 10 percent each. The capital city of Bangkok with some 2,213,522 persons and Thonburi with some 700,184 persons dominates the central region itself; it also contains a preponderant

Table 13.5. *Urbanization levels by region and size of town, 1970*

	Total	Central	Northeast	North	South
Total 1970 population	35,550,105	11,604,672	11,965,606	7,597,472	4,382,355
Population in all municipal areas	5,200,023	3,698,677	487,435	515,943	497,968
In municipal areas (%)	14.63	31.87	4.07	6.79	11.36
Distribution of municipal population (%)	100	71.13	9.37	9.92	9.58
Populations in towns above 20,000	4,281,932	3,377,376	304,631	265,758	334,167
In municipal areas (%)	12.04	29.10	2.55	3.50	7.63
Distribution of municipal population (%)	100	78.88	7.11	6.21	7.80
Population in towns above 10,000	4,952,986	3,547,520	471,668	497,656	436,142
In municipal areas (%)	13.93	30.57	3.94	6.55	9.95
Distribution of municipal population (%)	100	71.62	9.52	10.05	8.81

Source: same as Table 13.1; based on registration data.

Table 13.6. *Thailand's major cities and towns by population size-class, 1970**

	Location (region)	Population
1. *Capital City*		
Bangkok	Central	2,213,522
Thonburi	Central	700,184
		2,913,706**
2. *Towns over 100,000*		
Nakhon Rachasima	Northeast	102,095
Songkla	Southern	109,331
3. *Towns with 50,000–100,000*		
Ratburi	Central	64,263
Chonburi	Central	73,657
Samutprakan	Central	50,744
Sri Ayutthaya	Central	52,358
Ubonrachathani	Northeast	89,082
Udornthani	Northeast	54,869
Nakhon Srithammarat	Southern	74,489
Yala	Southern	52,962
Chiangmai	Northern	89,272
Nakhon Sawan	Northern	62,189
Phitsanulok	Northern	64,979

Source: NEDB; same as Table 13.1; municipal registrations.
* See note (**) to Table 13.1 for NEDB definition of northern category.
** According to the national census of 1970, the population of Bangkok-Thonburi was 2,495,312.

56 percent of the entire country's urban population. The dominance of a single metropolis in developing countries – at all levels, demographic, commercial and industrial, administrative – and its magnet-like effect on the whole country is well known and requires no elaboration here (e.g., see Hauser 1957; McGee 1967).

Apart from Bangkok-Thonburi, Thailand has only 2 other municipalities with a population of over 100,000; it has 11 towns with populations of 50,000–100,000 persons (of this category 4 are located in the central region), and 22 towns with 20,000–50,000 persons (of which 12 are located in the central region).[3]

Once the dominance of the central region, and more spectacularly of the capital city, is perceived, we can describe the remaining urban network as follows: There are in the outer provinces dispersed urban concentrations

[3] These figures confirm Hauser's statement (1957 p. 33) that: "In most of the smaller countries [of Asia and the Far East] there is a primate or great city many times, sometimes 5 to 10 times, the size of the second city, in contrast with the situation in the West which is characterized by systems of cities" (1957, p. 33).

of decreasing scale that are at the highest level the administrative capitals and largest commercial centers and, at the next level, district administrative and lesser commercial centers. In general it would seem that of all the regions it is the northeast with about 35 percent (6,286,000) of the country's population that, as the least economically developed part of the country, has proportionately the smallest number of urban centers.

This urban pattern is correlated with a transformative political and economic process that we can tentatively label: *from the galactic polity to the radial polity*. The galactic polity we have characterized in both topographical and political terms as a concentric-circle arrangement of a center and its satellites in which the center, though modal and exemplary, is surrounded by entities that are replicas of the center in decreasing scale and enjoy a greater or lesser measure of decentralized autonomy. We postulated that the Chulalongkorn-Damrong policy of political and administrative centralization combined with departmental specialization was correlated with a linear change from a pulsating polity to a polity characterized by deployment of an increased pool of power by and of expanding economic resources in the interests of modernization initiated from the top.

It is our thesis that the present urban arrangement of the country is partly a product and partly a faithful reflection of the center-initiated policy of creating a hierarchy of administrative units from circles and provinces to districts (and smaller units) with their respective administrative capitals. The result in a predominantly agricultural, industrially underdeveloped, country is the growth of a new kind of center-oriented, center-dominated polity that is *radial* in character, in that the various provincial capitals and urban constellations do not have so much interlocking relationships with one another, but rather are directly oriented to the national metropolis that engages them in discrete dyadic relations. Within each province the district administrative and market centers whose hinterland is the surrounding agricultural areas relate radially to the provincial capital, and all provincial capitals in turn relate radially to Bangkok rather than to one another. In the economic sphere the same domination of the metropolis is to be witnessed in its being (1) the converging point of the internal rice trade and virtually the sole port of overseas export of rice and (2) in other ways the central distribution point for retail commerce, especially of imported manufactures. All these processes and activities conspire to make the metropolis a mammoth uncontrolled urban growth, extractive of the wealth of the whole country to a degree previously unknown, concentrative of the political and administrative activities and personnel of the country, clogged up by both extremes of wealth and poverty. Since national politics "happens" there, any cataclysm occurring there can decide who "rules" the country.

Our main focus here is to see what kind of effect and representation this radial polity has in the sphere of sangha organization and monastic careers. We have already reviewed the contents of the Sangha Act of 1902,

which gave recognition to the attempted hierarchical structuring and centralization of the sangha in line with the Interior Ministry's civil administrative blueprint. That development was intimately connected with the sangha's participation in the plan to propagate education and with the attempt to weaken the regional brands of Buddhism and local monastic hierarchies and organizations and to replace them with a unified sangha responsible to Bangkok and a "standardized" Buddhism as defined by certain uniformities of monastic practices, festivals, and script.

What we will attempt to study and assess are some of the results of this policy. It is clear that as a nationally integrated and regulated sangha is evolved, as a radial hierarchical arrangement of ecclesiastical centers and offices is instituted, outlying monasteries and far-flung monks will concomitantly feel the magnetic pull of Bangkok-Thonburi and gravitate toward it. Taking this as a hypothesis, let us study the character of the monastic network in its formal and informal aspects.

In correlating rural-urban distributions and monastic institutions we can make two inferences that are at first sight paradoxical:

1. Though region 1, which contains the provinces and cities of Bangkok-Thonburi (unified in 1971 into a single province and municipality), has the largest concentration of lay people, it does not boast a corresponding preponderance in its religious personnel. As Table 13.7 shows, the number of monks enumerated for 1968 as dwelling in each of the following northeastern regions of 9, 10, 11 is not far behind the total for region 1. With respect to *novices*, region 1 is far exceeded by every northeastern region and by northern region 7 (Chiangmai).

This fact becomes even more significant when we realize that the vast majority of the resident relatively permanent (as opposed to the temporary) monks, and the student novices, residing in the twin city of Bangkok

Table 13.7. *Number of monks and novices by selected regions, 1968**

	Number of monks	Number of novices	Location
Region 1 (Bangkok-Thonburi)	20,715	4,610	Central
Region 7 (Chiangmai)	3,103	12,313	North
Region 8 (Udorn)	9,288	11,065	Northeast
Region 9 (Khon Khaen)	16,497	7,599	
Region 10 (Ubon)	16,910	14,455	
Region 11 (Nakhon Rachasima)	15,783	9,436	
National total	184,873	108,504	

Source: See Table 13.2, source (2).

* Major province(s) and city/town of each region given in parentheses.

Table 13.8. *Region of birth of monks studying at Mahachulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 1971*

Region of birth	Number	Percent
Central	45	13.9
Northeast	189	58.3
South	54	16.7
North	28	8.6
n.a.	8	2.5
Total	324	99.9

Source: Author's survey.

Thonburi are not locally born citizens but are migrants from the provinces, the largest contingent coming from the northeast. This is illustrated by Table 13.8, which pertains to a sample of monks studying at Mahachulalongkorn University in 1971.

The northeastern regions of Thailand are in fact the powerhouse of the country's sangha, a fact we shall note at several places in the ensuing chapters. It is remarkable that even if we discount from our calculation the large concentration of monks and novices of northeastern origin living in Bangkok and Thonburi (and elsewhere in the country), yet in the northeast provinces, containing 35 percent of the country's population, resided 32 percent of its monks and 40 percent of its novices enumerated during the Lent of 1968. A more telling statistic is that, as Table 13.9 shows, a large concentration of professional monks in the country (39%) whose service extends from one to nine Lents are again to be found in the northeastern regions (which also produce the largest number of scholar-novices who find their way to Bangkok to receive higher ordination and further education there).

Still another fact shown in Table 13.9 is that the ratio of temporary monks to permanent monks in the northeastern regions is significantly lower than in any other part of the country (excepting the north, where temporary monkhood is a new phenomenon) – thus signifying that when northeasterners become ordained as monks, more of them stay for greater lengths of time than do their counterparts elsewhere. Or to put the matter differently, the proportion of temporary monks to permanent monks living in monasteries during Lent is smaller in northeastern wat than most other parts of the country.[4] By comparison, region 1 has the highest rate in the

[4] Region 5, composed of the provinces of Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Tak, and Uttaradit with 4716 regular monks and 645 temporary monks, betters the northeast ratio: the northeast's temporary monks are 18 percent of the size of the regular, while region 5's temporary monks are 14 percent of the size of the regulars.

Table 13.9. *Length of service and Pali attainment of monks by region, 1969*

Regions*	Monks who have served: 10+ *phansa* Number	Percent	1–9 *phansa* Number	Percent	Temporary monks Number	Percent	Monks who have attained: Pali grades 3–5 Number	Percent	Pali grades 6–9 Number	Percent
Central										
Region 1 (Bangkok-Thonburi)	4,617	15.6	8,914	8.0	6,652	14.4	2,276	50.0	546	61.5
Other: Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15	12,216	41.4	46,059	41.0	23,633	51.1	864	19.0	157	17.7
*Northeast***										
Regions 8, 9, 10, 11 (Udornthani, Khonkaen, Ubonrachathani, Nakhonrachasima)	7,148	24.2	43,376	39.0	9,374	20.3	966	21.2	103	11.6
North										
Regions 6, 7 (Chiangrai, Chiangmai)	2,367	8.2	4,602	4.0	482	1.0	175	3.9	19	2.1
South										
Regions 16, 17, 19 (Nakhon Sithammarat, Phuket, Songkhla)	3,148	10.6	9,067	8.0	6,088	13.2	270	5.9	63	7.1
National total	29,496	100.0	112,018	100.0	46,249	100.0	4,551	100.0	888	100.0

* In parenthesis after each region is its major province and city/town.

** The northeastern regions contain 39 percent of the regular monks whose period of service ranges from one to nine *phansa*. Region 1, where the capital of Bangkok-Thonburi is located, contains about 8 percent of the same kind of monks, of whom the largest grouping is probably from the northeast; it also has 50 percent of the junior Pali scholars and about 61 percent of the more advanced scholars in the entire country. Also, the temporary monks in the northeast regions are in size equivalent to 18 percent of the regular monks, whereas in region 1 they are equivalent to 47 percent of the regular monks.

country because the large number of male government officials and employees concentrated in the capital and surrounding towns avail themselves of the opportunity provided by the state to be ordained. A government official can take fully paid leave of absence to get ordained for one *phansa*. All these facts add up to one conclusion: The monastic vocation, followed by that class of monks which is not characterized as temporary, is an important way of life for a significant number of males born in northeast Thailand, certainly more important than elsewhere in the country.

2. If the first half of our paradox is that the regional recruitment of monks and novices does not coincide with the distribution of the country's lay population, the second half of our paradox is that, despite their meager contribution to the recruitment of religious personnel, the urban areas contain the country's largest monasteries, with the majority of these large monasteries being located in Bangkok and Thonburi. This second pattern, however, need not be problematical, for we should expect urban areas to have larger wat (larger bodies of coresident religious) than rural areas, though not necessarily a larger ratio of monks and novices to the lay population.

Table 13.10 shows that region 1, containing the provinces of Bangkok and Thonburi, and so on, had in 1968 monastic communities whose monks ranged in number from 25 to 30 on the average, the Manhanikai chapter wat showing a slightly smaller concentration than those of the Thammayut persuasion. However, the same cannot be said of the number of resident novices. In fact the average number of novices in the more numerous Mahanikai wat in region 1 is not only less than that in the northern wat for reasons already discussed, but also not significantly different from the averages reported for the northeast. We shall return again to this important ratio, which shows that while the large metropolitan wat in Bangkok-Thonburi have a much larger population of monks as compared with novices, the proportions of monks to novices are much more equal in many other parts of the country, particularly in the northeast. Exceptions are the north, where novices are more frequent than monks, and in the extreme south, where the reverse obtains, there being in the wat more monks than novices.[5]

In actual fact Table 13.10 is too crude to reveal to us urban-rural differences in the size of wat communities; for not only is the size of wat in the city of Bangkok and Thonburi still larger than is reported for the entire region 1 (which takes in rural areas), but also even in those regions whose overall averages are low, the difference in size between urban and

[5] Region 16 in the south, where the historic city of Nakhon Srithammarat is located, and region 18 where Songkhla is located, are old centers of Buddhism, and the size of wat and the number of monks reflect this; but the border provinces in the south contain Muslims as well, and the religious communities may be large because the number of wat there are few.

Table 13.10. *Number of temples and average number of resident monks and novices per temple, selected regions, 1968*
(M = *Mahanikai chapter*, T = *Thammayut chapter*)

		Number of temples	Average number of monks per temple	Average number of novices per temple
Central				
Region 1. Provinces of Bangkok,	M	750	25	5
Thonburi, etc.	T	54	30	9
Region 2. Provinces of Ayutthaya,	M	981	11	2
Saraburi, etc.	T	20	12	4
North				
Region 7. Provinces of	M	1,449	2	8
Chiangmai, etc.	T	14	6	7
Northeast				
Region 8. Provinces of Udorn,	M	2,602	3	4
Sakorn Nakhon, Nongkai, etc.	T	272	5	5
Region 9. Provinces of Khonkaen,	M	3,527	4	5
Mahasarakham, etc.	T	208	5	5
South				
Region 16. Provinces of Surathani,	M	795	10	3
Nakhon Srithammarat, etc.	T	98	10	3
Region 18. Provinces of Songkla,	M	588	12	3
Phattalung, etc.	T	55	10	3

Source: Annual Report of the Department of Religious Affairs, 1968.

rural wat can be sometimes remarkable.[6] I shall have to illustrate this point, in the absence of other kinds of data, by recourse to specific examples of rural and urban wat, as in the following chart.

Let me give more flesh to these statements by describing the recruitment pattern and length of service of monks and novices in a central region rural community that I studied in 1960–1961.

Napa *tambon*, which is located in Chonburi province (central region), has 12 hamlets (*muban*). Within this collection of hamlets there are three in which a wat and a school are located and therefore act as the foci of more circumscribed communities. Wat Thongkung, the focus of this account, is located in hamlet 2 and is a focal point for hamlets 1–5, which I shall call the community of Napa. Wat Thongkung is a fairly impressive complex of buildings with a *bod*, a *sala*, many funeral monuments

[6] Pallegoix reported this rural-urban difference for the mid-nineteenth century: "In the country a monastery will have only ten or twelve monks; but in the towns and the capital a monastery has 100 to 600. It is estimated that in Bangkok alone there are 10,000 monks; and in the entire kingdom more than 100,000 monks" (1854, p. 23).

Chart 1. *Comparative composition of selected village and urban wat*

I. Village wat	
A. Northeast	
(1) Wat Ban Phran Muan, Udorn province, northeastern region (Tambiah 1970)	Lent 1961: 5 monks (including 3 newly ordained and disrobed after Lent); 3 novices newly ordained Lent 1966: 6 monks (including 5 newly ordained); 6 novices (including 4 newly ordained)
B. North	
(2) Wat Baan Ping, Chiangmai province, northern region (Moerman 1966)*	
(3) Wat Puddhabattakpa, Pasang, Chiangmai, northern region (Tambiah) A large rural wat famous for meditation teaching	Lent 1971: 33 monks (including 11 newly ordained *navaga*, 10 of whom disrobed at end of Lent); 60 novices
C. Central region	
(4) Wat Bangkhuad, Phranakhon (Bangkok) province; central region (Kaufman 1960).	Lent 1954: 10 permanent monks; no novices. Only 2 of these monks were under 30; and 8 of them had served 5 Lents or more (with three having 13, 14, and 49 years' service, respectively). Kaufman notes that in the rural areas of Pranakorn province the number of monks per wat averages about 14 and the novices about 2.5. (In Bangkok itself wat would be larger than the average for the province, which is 30 monks and 6 novices to a wat.)**
II. Urban wat	
A. Monasteries in provincial towns (Tambiah)	
(1) Wat Podharam, Nakhon Sawan (largest wat in the province and city)	Post-Lent 1971: 41 regular monks; 104 novices
(2) Wat Phra Singh, Chiangmai (largest in the province and city; a royal wat)	Lent 1971: 44 monks (including 10 newly ordained *navaga*), all of whom left at end of Lent; 115 novices; 72 *dekwat* (temple boys)
(3) Wat Majjimawas, Udorn (largest wat in the province and city; a royal wat)	Lent 1971: 75 monks (including 15 newly ordained who left after Lent); 155 novices
(4) Wat Muang Mang, Chiangmai (commoner wat)	Lent 1971: 24 monks (including 8 *navaga*); novices 43; nuns 11
B. Monasteries in Bangkok-Thonburi	
(5) Wat Chanasongkram (royal wat)	Lent 1971: 106 monks (including 25 newly ordained *navaga*); 66 novices
(6) Wat Chakkravat (royal wat):	During period August 1970–July 1971, 55 were newly ordained as *navaga*, 31 of who left monkhood at end of Lent 1971. The number of regular monks (excluding above) in 1971 was 92, novices 68.

Chart 1 (cont.)

(7) Wat Thongnopakun (royal wat)	Lent 1971: 48 monks (including 15 newly ordained *navaga*) (mean number of Lents spent by regular monks = 13.7); 19 novices Lent 1970: 45 monks (including *navaga*); 23 novices
(8) Wat Mahathat (royal wat—largest in the whole country)	Lent 1970: 235 monks (including 53 newly ordained *navaga*); 180 regular monks and 2 visiting monks; 77 novices Lent 1971: 241 monks (including about 50 newly ordained); 83 novices
(9) Wat Prapiren (commoner wat)	Lent 1971: Approximately 55 monks (including 20 newly ordained *navaga*); about 20 novices
(10) Wat Chaichanasongkram (commoner wat)	Post-Lent 1971: 22 monks, 8 novices, 5 *Dekwat*
(11) Wat Chansamosern, Bangkrabue (commoner wat)	Lent 1971: 38 monks (including 18 *navaga* who disrobed at end of Lent); 10 novices

* Moerman gives no definite numerical data, but his comments are illuminating. The clergy (both monks and novices) amounted to 8 in 1960 (p. 165). The village never had a priest older than 30; the abbot was 22; of the 10 villagers who had been monks none served beyond age of 24. Altogether, 30 percent of men of over 15 had been ordained at some time as monks or novices.

In the area (Chiengkham district) all monks begin as novices. "Some time after ten years of age boys don the yellow robe. Most leave after a few years, but a few remain in the *sangha* to become priests for a year or two before returning to the secular world. . . . A bare handful stay, in the temple to make it their life" (p. 139). There are in Chiengkham three novices to each monk.

Actually, Moerman reports a continuity among temple boys, novices, and monks: The temple boy (*xajom*) status is the first step for a clerical career. "All *xajom* become novices within a year; all novices were *xajom;* all priests were novices" (p. 145).

** Referring to the situation in 1955, Kaufman wrote as follows: "In the province of Phranakhon, of which Bangkhuad, as well as Bangkok [city], is a part, there are 180 *wats,* as compared with an over-all average of 290 per province. There are over 5,000 monks and 1,000 novices. This implies an average of 30 monks and six novices to a *wat;* however one finds that the predominance of monks and novices is found in the Bangkok *wat.* In the rural areas of the province, the number of monks per *wat* averages about 14 and the novices about 2.5. In Bangkhuad, there are 10 monks and no novices" (1960, p. 101).

(*chedi*), a separate residence for its abbot, and wooden *khuti* (living quarters for its monks).

Just before the beginning of Lent of 1960, 12 young men were ordained; all but 2 of them disrobed at the end of the three-month season. All these young temporary monks (their ages ranged from 20 to 23) were sons of farmers, five of who lived in the local community of Napa and four more in the local *tambon.* Three were sons of farmers who had moved out of the *tambon* but still wished their sons to be ordained in the wat of their natal village.

At the end of the Lent the number of regular monks consisted of eight (including two newly ordained who elected to stay). Seven of these

eight regulars, including the abbot, were born in Napa *tambon*. Only three of them had completed over 3 Lents, the abbot, the most senior in service, having served 10 Lents; the six regulars who had served 2 Lents or less were indeed all young, being 21 years old, and the majority of them were not destined to stay long.

Novices were conspicuous by their paucity: Not more than three were present in the wat, all recruited locally. In 1962 there were 14 new monks ordained before Lent: Eight of them came from the local community, 3 others from the same *tambon*, and the rest from adjoining districts.

At the end of my study of Wat Thongkung and the community of Napa I came to the following conclusion: The core of "professional monks" who view monkhood as a relatively long-term office is small indeed; many of the young monks usually give up their robes after a brief period of one Lent, and the rest tend to give up within three years or so. The majority of these monks are recruited from the local community, and hence the local wat becomes the center for religious service among those of the residents who choose to become monks. I should emphasize one important feature of wat like Thongkung located in the central region of Thailand. In the relatively more affluent communities of the Central Plain, which are also better served by government-run schools, few youths need to be ordained as novices and monks in order to use the monastic facilities for furthering their education. The "mortality" rate is high, the youths disrobing after brief periods of service. That this may be the pattern for the communities of the Central Plain in the vicinity of Bangkok-Thonburi and other cities is lent support by Kaufman's account of Bangkhuad, situated quite close to Bangkok (see Chart 1).

The northern pattern is, as I have intimated before, different from that prevailing in the rest of the country, in that the custom is to ordain novices in large numbers and for most of them to leave after a period of time. Some, more committed educationally and vocationally, stay on to become ordained monks. The custom of ordaining young men of 20–21 as temporary monks, which is usual elsewhere in Thailand, is not traditional in the north, though in recent times it is taking hold especially in the towns as central Thai standards become the norm.

Once again, let me give a brief account of two wat of my acquaintance situated in the northern province of Chiangmai in order to show how the composition of religious personnel and the educational context differ sharply from those prevalent in the Central Plain.

The *tambon* (commune) in which the two wat are situated contains, for purposes of ecclesiastical administration, two divisions; the division I am concerned with here had six wat, each located in a different hamlet. Of these six wat, Wat Kieulaeluang was one of the two chief ones, being entitled to hold ordination ceremonies. In 1963 this wat had 4 monks and 18 novices. Wat Umeng was a smaller wat serving the hamlet of the same name. In April 1963 (before Lent) it had 1 monk and 6 novices, the single

monk acting as abbot; when I visited this wat again in the middle of Lent 1966, it had 1 monk (the abbot) and 12 novices, only 1 of whom had been newly ordained that year.

Let us scrutinize more closely the six novices who were serving in Wat Umeng in 1963. Each of them had served as a *dekwat* for a year before being ordained: Their ages ranged from 12 to 17, and five of them had already served three Lents, while the last had served four Lents. Five of these novices were born in the same hamlet (Umeng), while the sixth came from the adjoining one.

It is emphatically the case, especially in the rural wat of the north, that at any one time there are many more novices in a wat than there are monks. An important feature is that before becoming a novice a boy must serve as a *dekwat* for a year or so in order that he may learn Lannathai, the traditional language in which much of the sacred literature was written. He must pass an examination in Lannathai before being ordained novice. Thus being a *dekwat* was a precondition for becoming a novice, and most novices in turn disrobed before they were 20, only a few becoming ordained as monks.

When the abbot of Wat Kiewlaeluang was questioned about the significance of novicehood, he commented that most parents wished that their sons, after they completed the fourth grade of their primary schooling, would become novices for a period of time so that they could learn Lannathai, Pali, and Thai languages, chants, and sermons and also receive training in religious conduct. He also said that there was an old saying that when one becomes a novice at 12, one does merit for one's mother, and when one becomes a monk at 20, one does merit for one's father. Lastly, he commented that some parents were so poor that they could not afford to send all of their sons to secondary schools or even to maintain them at home. In such cases, the parents may send one or two of their children to the wat to become novices. They will leave the wat when they are 17–19 years old; only 1 in 5 or fewer will continue and become professional monks.

This account of the north is well supported by Moerman's comments on a rural wat located in the Chiengkham district of Chiangmai province, where clearly it is the novices who are the major component of the religious community (see Chart 1, I, B, [2]). Moerman supports his account with statistics that leave us in no doubt about the northern ratio of novices to monks, which is the opposite of that prevailing in the central part of Thailand (Table 13.11).

In considering the composition of urban wat one should make a distinction between those located in provincial towns and those located in Bangkok-Thonburi. The distinctions relate not so much to size – for there are provincial monasteries that are as large as many of the Bangkok-Thonburi monasteries – as it does to the ratio of monks to novices.

Chart 1 gives the composition of the three largest wat in the provincial

Table 13.11. *Clergy in north and central Thailand, 1960*

	Monks	Novices	Ratio of monks to novices	Total
Northern region	7,591	20,935	1 : 3	28,526
Central region	85,955	19,010	5 : 1	104,965
Chiengkham district in Chiangmai province, northern Thailand	183	608	1 : 3	791

Source: Adapted from Moerman (1966), p. 140, Table 1.

capital cities of Nakhon Sawan, Chiangmai, and Udorn, (items II, A, [1], [2], and [3] respectively) and also of a fourth wat in Chiangmai. We notice two essential features about them: (1) Unlike in rural wat the regular or professional monks are a more numerous category than temporary monks in provincial towns; and (2) the novices in turn are a more numerous category than the regular monks by as much as two or three times.

Now if we scrutinize the composition of the wat located in the cities of Bangkok-Thonburi, we see that while feature (1) prevails, there is a reversal concerning the ratio of monks to novices, in that regular monks now exceed novices. The dramatic instance occurs in the largest wat in the country – Wat Mahathat – where monks exceed novices by more than 2 to 1; but in most other wat as well the regular monks exceed the novices by variable margins.

The reason for this pattern[7] is as follows: The large provincial urban wat are important educational centers to which come studious novices from village wat; it is in these provincial wat that they receive their preliminary Pali instruction; thereafter, those novices who show intellectual ability by passing the lower examinations, and who are also now close to 20 years old, must move to the wat in Bangkok-Thonburi in order that they may study in the famous Pali schools there. It is these schools that are able to prepare them for the higher examinations. Thus within a short time of moving to Bangkok-Thonburi these novices become eligible for ordination as full-fledged monks. They duly ordain and continue with their education, the most important factor in accounting for the larger

[7] The inferences made from the selected instances described in Chart 1 can be confirmed with the cruder figures given in Table 13.7, in which the category monks includes both regular and temporary monks: In region 1 (where Bangkok and Thonburi are located) the number of monks to novices is 20,715 to 4,610. Even if we take into account that 25 percent of the monks are temporary, still the ratio of monks to novices is more than 3 to 1, while in the provinces (excepting the northern and southern) the ratio is either equal or favors the novices when the necessary correction is made.

Table 13.12. *Mahachula University students by place ordained as novices (sample = 324)*

	Number	Percent
Same *tambon* (commune) as birth	177	54.63
Same district as birth (but different *tambon*)	63	19.44
Same province as birth (but different district)	30	9.26
Bangkok-Thonburi	7	2.16
Elsewhere	28	8.64
Never ordained as novice/n.a.	19	6.26

Table 13.13. *Mahachula University students by place ordained as monks (sample = 324)*

	Number	Percent
Same wat in which ordained as novice	69	21.5
Same district in which ordained as novice (but different wat)	13	4.05
Same province in which ordained as novice (but different district)	15	4.67
Bangkok-Thonburi	146	45.48
Elsewhere	49	15.27
Not ordained as monk yet	7	2.18
Not ordained as novice	22	6.85

proportion of (young) monks to novices in the capital. The provincial centers recruit and perform the early academic training of able young novices; Bangkok and Thonburi complete their higher education as monks in their twenties and early thirties.

Our sample of some 324 students at Mahachulalongkorn University (all of whom, save 22 novices, were ordained monks) can provide us with information (see Tables 13.12 and 13.13) that establishes that the vast majority of Bangkok student-monks (75%) have been ordained as novices by and large in their districts of birth in the provinces but that nearly half of them have been ordained as monks in Bangkok-Thonburi, which is their present residence and place of higher study.[8]

Table 13.14 reinforces the same conclusion: Only 14 percent of the monk-students at the university were born in the central region (where the capital is located), but 58 percent of them were ordained in the central region (virtually all in the capital). It also shows that the largest contingent of students from the northeast (58%) is more likely than students from other regions to be ordained monk in the capital.

[8] 99.38 percent of the sample came to Bangkok-Thonburi from the provinces.

Table 13.14. *Mahachula students by region of birth and place of ordination as monks (sample = 324)*

	Percent					Not ordained as monks	Total
	Central	Northeast	South	North	n.a.		
Region where born	13.9	58.3	16.7	8.6	2.5	—	100.0
Region where ordained	57.9	16.8	10.9	5.6	1.8	7.0	100.0

In recent years there has been a slight shift in the educational pattern that reinforces even more the importance of Bangkok-Thonburi as the powerful magnet attracting able and ambitious novices and young monks. Schools run by wat or religious bodies or by the government – adult, teacher training, university – now offer novices and monks secular learning in addition to purely religious education. I shall describe these institutions in a later chapter, but here let us recognize (as the previous information on a sample of monks and novices at a university indicates) their intensified attractiveness to those youths who are traveling along the monastic educational network.

My proposition that the provincial monastic centers provide the lower rungs of religious education while Bangkok-Thonburi provides the upper reaches for those who have cleared the lower hurdles can happily be proved with other quantitative data. Table 13.15 is concerned with *naktham* students – *naktham* studies are the early religious (*thamma*) studies with which novices and newly ordained monks (who have never been novices) begin. We see that region 1, where Bangkok and Thonburi are situated, is of minor importance for these studies as compared with the other regions (especially the northeast).

Table 13.16 contains figures relating to the more important Pali language and textual studies. We see that while the other regions and their provincial monastic institutions primarily cater to the first two Pali grades, the facilities for higher grades of Pali studies (particularly that beyond grade 4) are heavily concentrated in region 1 (particularly in the city of Bangkok and Thonburi). The very highest grades (8 and 9) are rarely passed by a candidate from outside the capital. We are thus on firm ground when we say that the city of Bangkok and Thonburi in region 1 is the country's focal point for the higher levels of traditional Pali studies, while the outlying provincial towns provide the lower levels. As we shall see later in detail, this dominance in traditional education is heavily reinforced by the city's provision of the newer facilities for monks and novices that combine the study of secular subjects with religious education.

The conclusions are confirmed by our sample of Mahachula University

students. Of a total of 324, 77 percent had already passed the highest *naktham ek* examination before coming to the capital. But the story as regards the more highly valued Pali learning is different: Only 9 percent had passed Pali grade 4 and 2 percent grade 6 before coming to Bangkok; but after coming to the capital 30.9 percent had passed grade 5, 15 percent grade 6, 5.6 percent grade 7, and 3.4 percent grade 8.

Table 13.15. *Number and percent of students (monks and novices) who took and passed naktham examinations in 1968, by region*

	NAKTHAM LEVEL					
	Thri (Third grade: lowest)		*Tho* (Second grade)		*Ek* (First grade: highest)	
	Took	Passed	Took	Passed	Took	Passed
Region 1	2,087	1,111	1,099	551	1,058	199
Provinces of Bangkok-Thonburi, etc.		(3%)	(5%)	(5%)	(11%)	(7%)
Northeast regions						
Region 8	7,295	2,201	1,517	672	662	160
Region 9	11,092	5,954	3,682	2,159	1,673	584
Region 10	10,161	3,747	2,029	1,046	879	230
Region 11	7,683	3,539	2,138	1,182	944	318
	36,231	15,441	9,366	5,059	4,158	1,292
		(49%)	(44%)	(45%)	(42%)	(48%)
Northern regions						
Region 6	9,376	2,967	3,287	1,541	861	304
Region 7	4,840	1,790	2,005	833	774	135
	14,216	4,757	5,292	2,374	1,635	439
		(15%)	(25%)	(21%)	(16%)	(16%)
Other regions	21,190	10,590	5,561	3,170	3,034	777
	(33%)	(33%)	(26%)	(28%)	(31%)	(28%)
Total	73,724	31,899	21,318	11,154	9,885	2,707
		(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

Source: Annual Report B.E. 2511.

Table 13.16. *Number and percent of students (monks and novices) who took and passed Pali examinations in 1968, by region*

	Parian 1–2 grades		Parian 3–9 grades	
	Took exams	Passed exams	Took exams	Passed exams
Region 1				
Provinces of Bangkok-Thonburi, etc.	918 (18%)	132 (23%)	2,724 (49%) (60 candidates took *prayog* 8; 15 passed) (80 candidates took *prayog* 9; 4 passed)	566 (43%)
Northeast regions				
Region 8	291	20	225 (no candidates took *prayog* 8 and 9)	53
Region 9	1,071	114	591 (only 2 candidates each for *prayog* 8 and 9; none passed)	197
Region 10	381	25	232 (only 3 candidates each for *prayog* 8 and 9; none passed)	51
Region 11	371	41	201 (no candidates for *praygog* 8 and 9)	61
	2,114 (42%)	200 (35%)	1,249 (23%)	362 (28%)
Northern regions				
Region 6	158	12	85 (no candidates took *prayog* 7, 8, 9)	14
Region 7	240	19	96	13
	398 (8%)	31 (5%)	181 (3%)	27 (2%)
Other regions	1,567 (31%)	210 (37%)	1,376 (25%) (20 candidates took *prayog* 8; 3 passed; 18 candidates took *prayog* 9; none passed)	340 (27%)
Total	4,997 (100%)	573 (100%)	5,530 (100%)	1,295 (100%)

Source: Annual Report B.E. 2511.

14. Monkhood as an Avenue of Social Mobility

In a seminal essay Wyatt (1966) discussed the evidence for the thesis that the Buddhist monkhood was an avenue of social mobility or, to put it differently, that sons of farmers and peasants were able to enter the ranks of government service via the channels of religious education.

In Chapter 11 we have cited evidence that during the Ayutthaya era religious examinations were periodically held and that ranks and positions were given the learned monks. In fact the educated monks were favored with higher *sakdina* that paralleled the grading of secular positions in the king's service. We also remarked that it was conceived as a royal duty not only to authorize the holding of examinations but also to ensure that monks did assiduously engage in learning rather than find in the robe an excuse for indolence and a refuge from royal service.

Wat education included not only dhamma and Pali studies but also instruction in astrology, medicine, law. Wyatt surmises that wat education provided the stepping stone to employment in the king's service in the Department of Royal Astrologers, Department of Physicians, Department of Royal Scribes, and other departments dealing with religious and legal affairs.

We are on firmer ground later, in the Bangkok period, to follow the pattern of conversion from monkhood to advantageous lay status. As Tej Bunnag puts it: Traditional education "was based on the Buddhist clergy in provincial and metropolitan monasteries and on the corp of scribes under royal patronage." Monk-scholars could expect, if they left the order, to receive "royal patronage in the corp of scribes where their learning could be put to use in both the affairs of state and in the instruction of less learned colleagues and subordinates."[1] In the 1870s, for instance, instruction in the palace school for the royal pages (from whose ranks the king chose his administrators) was in the hands of the royal scribes (Wyatt 1970, p. 67).

But it is clear that the nineteenth century ex-monks did not merely aspire to the positions of scribes and teachers but also to higher positions of power and privilege. This situation had obviously become problematical during the reign of King Mongkut (1851–1868), who, faced with the

[1] Tej Bunnag, "From Monastery to University: A Survey of Thai Education from 1824 to 1921," in *Education in Thailand: A Century of Experience. A Revised Version of the Third Academic Conference Report 1969*, Thailand, 1970, p. 2.

fact in 1854 that some 60 educated monks had left monkhood seeking secular rewards, passed certain important decrees to stem the process. Mongkut significantly insisted that only "men of good family and background, the sons of nobles" could obtain "higher positions in the Ministries of Interior, War and Foreign Affairs." Monastic dwellers, he declared,

may become officials only in the departments of the Courts of Justice, Royal Scribes, Church Administration, Royal Pundits and Ecclesiastical Courts (Wyatt 1966). The decree of 2 November 1854, passed six months later was even more severe: if any ecclesiastical official (*phra rachakhana*) or degree holder (*parian*) leaves the monkhood he will become a *phrai luang* (commoner with corvée duties to the King) attached for compulsory labour service to the Royal Printing Press . . . (Wyatt 1966).[2]

Glossary of civil titles (in descending order)

1. *Chaophraya* the highest rank in civil government, generally conferred upon those who were ministers of one of the major traditional departments (*krom*), or after 1889 one of the ministries
2. *Phraya* lower rank in civil administrative hierarchy, generally of subministerial rank
3. *Phra**
4. *Luang*
5. *Khun*

still lower titles in descending order in the civil administrative hierarchy

* But *phra* is also an honorific for monks (and for persons and objects having a venerated religious association).

Glossary of major ecclesiastical titles

Ecclesiastical titles of rank (descending order)

1. *Somdet phrasangkharat (sangharaja)* Supreme patriarch.
2. *Somdet phrarachakhana* Holders of this title are automatically members of the *Mahatherasamakhom* (Council of Elders).
3. *Phrarachakhana chaokhana raung* A title signifying a rank in between 2 and 4.
4. *Phrarachakhana* This class of dignitaries is subdivided into four grades: *chan tham* (dhamma), *chan tep (dev)*, *chan rad (raj)*, and *chan saman.*
5. *Phra khru*

Note:
The title of *phramaha* is given to any monk who has passed any of the Pali exams (*parian* grades [*prayog*] 3–9). A scholar may be given an ecclesiastical title such as *phra khru or phrarachakhana* for his educational attainments.

Ecclesiastical titles for administrative monk-officials (in descending order)

1. *Somdet phrasangkharat* Supreme patriarch (who is head of the sangha and is assisted by the Council of Elders)

[2] For the reader's convenience I have prepared glossaries of civil and ecclesiastical titles that should prove useful in following the details in this and the next chapters.

2. *Chaokhana phak* Ecclesiastical governor of a region
3. *Chaokhana changwat* Ecclesiastical governor of a province
4. *Chaokhana amphur* Ecclesiastical governor of a district
5. *Chaokhana tambon* Ecclesiastical governor of a commune
6. *Chaoawat* (*chaowat*) Abbot of a wat

Numerical distributions of holders of ecclesiastical titles and offices are given in Chapter 16.

The punitive character of the royal decrees is a pointer to the strain toward mobility on the part of educated and office-holding monks that existed in actuality. Mongkut was no doubt concerned with the deleterious effects on the sangha if the disrobing went unchecked and unregulated. Nevertheless, despite his inventive genius, Mongkut was after all a traditionalist so naturally wedded to ideas of birth, ascription, and hierarchy that not only did he not sympathize with the aspirations of men of low birth but of ability who wanted to improve their stations in life, but also, ironically, the implications of his own leaving of the sangha for a kingship.

Wyatt (1966) cites statistics to show that during the 30-year period from 1870 to 1900 (i.e., up to the middle of King Chulalongkorn's reign) 45 percent of the monks who were awarded religious degrees gave up their robes; of these 57 (about 30%) entered government service (and the rest 132 other occupations), 30 joining the Ministry of Education, and 10 going into the Ministry of Interior. (Apparently when Prince Damrong moved from the Education Ministry to the Interior Ministry, he took about five ex-monk-officials with him.)

It is evident that many of these ex-monks turned administrators made good: During the same 30-year period, 12 ex-monks reached the high rank of *phraya*, 16 of *khun*, 16 of *luang*, and 9 of *phra*. Perhaps the most vivid example Wyatt cites is the career of Chaophraya Yommarat.

When these details are looked at closely, certain further inferences are possible. That of the 57 ex-monks who entered government service, at least 22 (10 in the Ministry of the Interior, 4 in the Ministry of Defense, 4 in the Ministry of Finance, 1 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 in the Ministry of Public Works, and 2 in the Palace Ministry) did find jobs outside the Education Ministry, in places where the corridors of power were situated, shows that, despite King Mongkut's fuming, former monks did indeed successfully jump the barriers and found positions theoretically reserved for the sons of nobles.

Presumably working with the same or similar primary sources as Wyatt, Phramaha Prayudh (Phra Wisudhimoli), a brilliant scholar-monk holding high office at Mahachulalongkorn University, gives the following breakdown[3] for the 20-year period 1870–1890 (as reported in a survey done in 1920):

[3] Phramaha Prayudh, "Monks' roles in contemporary society" (Thai), in *Buddha Sasana Gab Samokhom Thai Prachuban* [*Buddhism and Contemporary Thai Society*], Siam Samakhom, Bangkok 1970.

Total number of monks and novices who received ecclesiastical degrees:	246
Number who resigned (disrobed):	147 (59.7%)
Number who continued in the sangha:	99 (40.3%)

Phra Prayudh gives us a useful comparison of the later careers of the most illustrious of these 246 scholars[4]:

Achievement within the sangha (ecclesiastical titles)		Achievement in lay society (civil titles)	
Supreme patriarch (somdet phrasangkharat) (sangharaja)	1	*Chao phraya*	1
Somdet phrarachakhana	3	*Phraya*	8
Phra rachakhana, chaokhana raung	5	*Phra*	6
Phra rachakhana, chan tham	7	*Luang*	10
Phra rachakhana, chan tep	4	*Khun*	13
Phra rachakhana, chan rad	1	(Other)	
Phra rachakhana, chan saman	15	Director general	1
Phra khru	6	Doctor	1
		Kamnan (commune headman)	1
		Puyaiban (hamlet headman)	1
	42		42

Phra Prayudh's analysis informs us that around 60 percent of the religious who gained ecclesiastical degrees did disrobe to pursue their fortunes in lay society; but it is equally noteworthy that about 40 percent of the scholars also elected to continue within the sangha as regular monks. We should always keep in mind this latter aspect of continuation in monkhood as life-long religious vocation, lest it be falsely inferred that all monks and novices who succeed scholastically engage in studies with the intention of leaving the sangha. We shall see in a subsequent chapter how the sangha itself provides scope for achievement for those dedicated to the vocation of monkhood.

Anyway, these facts reported by Wyatt and Phra Prayudh indicate that we may well have to modify Rabibhadana's assertion that there was little social mobility in traditional Thailand, especially in the period 1782–1873, because the *nai-phrai* (superior-dependent) distinction was basic and disjunctive. One should of course take note of the point that at the time only the sons of nobles (*khunnang*) of the *phra* rank or higher could gain entrance to exclusive royal service such as the Royal Pages Corps. Entrance into the upper levels was restricted by both law and convention to the sons

[4] The ecclesiastical titles rank from the highest to the lowest; normally anyone who reaches any level of *phra rachakhana* and upward is considered to have achieved within th sangha. Among the civil titles *chao phraya* is usually senior ministerial rank, *phraya* of ministerial or departmental head rank.

of the upper nobility who had passed through a period of service as pages at court or in the establishment of the provinces (Wyatt 1968, p. 210). Nevertheless, I believe actuality differed from the blueprint. While Rabibhadana, to support his thesis, cites Mongkut's policy and degrees with respect to educated monks leaving the sangha, he fails to appreciate fully the fact that in reality able ex-monks, who are prime examples of men born to commoner (*phrai*) status,[5] did achieve mobility in lay society.

Rabibhadhana gives excellent documentation of the political dynamism and fluidity of traditional times, as evidenced by frequent rebellions and unstable successions. I would argue that it is precisely in such situations, when the retinues and officials of kings changed rapidly, that social mobility and careerism were high. I would further like to hypothesize that the process of social mobility in traditional society might have begun to slow down especially during Mongkut's and Chulalongkorn's times when the Chakkri dynasty itself became well established and had stable relations with the important noble families (e.g., the Bunnaks). We may recall that some of the factors that led to the stabilization of royalty and nobility were the increased revenue through trade with Europeans, the monopoly over arms wielded by the government, and the building of better communications with outlying provinces allowing for greater political regulation and integration and centralization. Furthermore, the immigration of Chinese labor in vast numbers into Thailand also helped to stabilize the Chakkri political system and social stratification by rendering the politics of clientship effete (because non-Thai labor was plentifully available on a monetary basis).

But it is evident that this slowing down, if it ever did take place, was once again accentuated by Chulalongkorn's modernization program – the creation of ministries and departments at the center, the institution of a national territorial system of administration, the building of transport, postal, and irrigation networks. All this could not have been pushed through unless the country could also devise an effective system of secular education that would recruit talent and train it to carry out these tasks. We have in Chapter 11 reviewed the way in which Chulalongkorn's educational measures affected the traditional wat-based schools run by monks for the education not only of their own religious personnel but also of lay students. Let us therefore return here to our present theme of how the ecclesiastical educational system and examinations have continued to serve as a vehicle of social mobility in Thai society – not only in the past but in the present as well.

In recent years, particularly since the establishment of two ecclesiastical universities, there are two kinds of educational paths available to novices and monks: The first is to pursue the traditional *pariyattitham* studies, particularly the study of Pali language and texts, and sit the traditional *parian*

[5] It is true that persons of royal or aristocratic status sometimes become monks or novices, but such persons were always a very small minority.

exams, of which grade 9 is the highest level (degree), which only a very small number reach. This Pali education can be acquired in the traditional schools run by various wat, only a few of which are able to train students for the last stages, particularly grades 7–9. The second kind of educational path available is to pursue the modern course of studies at one of the universities, which teach secular subjects *in addition* to the traditional religious and Pali subjects and give B.A. degrees in education, social studies, psychology, and so on, as well as in Buddhist studies. (The universities also insist that candidates should have passed at least *parian* grade 4 before they can be admitted to university or teacher-training courses.)

There are of course some scholars who pursue both courses of studies concurrently, striving to get the highest Pali degrees as well as the university degrees, although the trend today is for more and more of the young not to seek to pass a higher Pali grade than *prayog* 6 and to concentrate their further efforts in securing a university education.

One of the interesting points that emerges from Phra Prayudh's analysis (1970) is that there is virtually no difference in the proportions of scholars who leave the sangha after securing the highest traditional Pali degree (*prayog* 9) and the university B.A. degree. For example, during the years 1955–1969:

1. There were 88 monks who achieved the highest Pali degree (*prayog* 9), and of these 44 (50.0%) resigned afterward.
2. There were 288 monks who achieved the B.A. degree in Buddhist studies (Puttasart Bundit [P.T.B.]), and of these 137 (47.6%) disrobed subsequently.

In an essay written earlier in 1968, Phra Prayudh gives a slightly different set of statistics in his attempt to argue that modern education does not necessarily impel more of the religious to discard their robes than did and does traditional education. Between the years 1926 and 1955, 81 monks and novices passed the highest traditional Pali examination (*prayog* 9), and of these 48 (59.26%) disrobed; in the decade 1956–1965, 64 passed *prayog* 9, and 26 (40.62%) had so far disrobed. In comparison, during roughly the same decade (1954–1965), 147 monks acquired the B.A. degree at Mahachulalongkorn University, and only 48 (32.65%) had so far elected to rejoin lay society.[6]

Presumably, then, the expansion of the education of monks and novices to include secular subjects does not necessarily accentuate the proportions of educated men leaving the sangha (although I personally doubt whether Phra Prayudh's case is conclusively proved by the figures just cited). Nevertheless, taking into account all the data provided so far from 1870 onward, we cannot be far off the mark if we conclude that about one-half the scholars who reach the highest levels of education open to them at present elect to disrobe not long afterward, marrying and founding families and pursuing occupations suited to their interests. The age range within which

[6] The terminal date here is 1971.

disrobing usually takes place is 25 to 35; if a monk is still in robes beyond this age, it is likely that he will remain in them for the rest of his life.

There is one feature that has until the recent past greatly aided the monk or novice in converting to lay status; and the loss of this advantage has in some ways created a crisis in monastic education, a crisis that is now evoking an active response of reform. This advantage that operated in the past was the favorable comparison of ecclesiastical examinations and grades with those operating in the secular sphere. Thus 20 years ago, soon after Thammasat University had been established for the teaching of law, economics, and politics, and so on, a monk or novice who had passed *prayog* 3, the lowest Pali exam was considered eligible to enter the university; soon after World War II the qualifying limit was raised to *prayog* 6; more recently, this privilege has been withdrawn altogether.

Again, some 10 years ago the highest *naktham*[7] *ek* qualification was considered equivalent to *matayom* 3 (i.e., lower secondary level). Correspondingly, the superior *prayog* 5 in Pali studies was rated equivalent to *matayom* 6 (i.e., upper secondary level, currently *maw saw* 3) and entitled the holder to sit the preuniversity examinations and thereby seek entry into a secular university. Finally, the highest *prayog* 9 was given an evaluation corresponding to a diploma (*anuprinya*). These rates of conversion are no longer operative today. However, a novice or monk who has passed *prayog* 5 is entitled to sit the *maw saw* 5 in the secular system. At an even lower level of achievement, 10 years ago a monk or novice of the right age who had the relatively low *naktham tho* qualification was considered eligible to become, say, a policeman. These equivalences are no longer conceded by the government, though for certain kinds of work ecclesiastical educational qualifications are still given consideration.

In other words, the favorable rate of conversion from the ecclesiastical system to the secular system has been progressively devalued, mainly as a result of the secular system itself proliferating and bettering its standards and scope, while the ecclesiastical system has stayed in its groove. It is this discrepancy that is partly, perhaps largely, behind the pressure for reform of the ecclesiastical system of education and the active promotion of ecclesiastical universities[8] and teacher-training institutions by scholar-monks whose standards and curriculums would match those of their secular counterparts – a subject we shall consider in a later chapter.

Some Methodological Considerations

What kinds of careers ex-monks and ex-novices (we are speaking of regulars here) follow when they reenter lay society today is probably an impossible

[7] *Naktham* (literally "student of dhamma") is elementary religious instruction for novices and monks (and even laymen), not requiring Pali, and consists of three grades (*thri, tho, ek* respectively).

[8] A novice or monk can enter Mahachulalongkorn or Mahamakut Ecclesiastical universities if he had passed *naktham ek* and *parian prayog* 4; the effect of this on the decline of higher Pali studies on traditional lines will also be commented on later.

question to answer comprehensively. In any case, I do not have the information to give quantitative measures for the country as a whole over specified periods of time. It is important to realize that it is not only educated monks and novices who leave the sangha but also those who have educationally achieved little – and these are larger in number. Individual wat do not keep track of the careers of those who move away, and the Department of Religious Affairs, which gathers fairly copious statistics on those who are members of the sangha at Lent time each year, is equally ignorant of the fate of novices and monks after they discard their robes.

I have cited some facts concerning the highly educated ecclesiastics who leave the sangha; since such persons are fairly conspicuous, they can be traced in the society at large, and I shall give further information about some of them, mainly in the form of biographies. But we simply do not know what happens to the large majority of monks and novices who have resided in Bangkok-Thonburi, acquired some measure of *naktham* and Pali education, and then left. The low achievers are not only plentiful, but they also disappear easily into the large mass of equally inconspicuous mankind. As one monk remarked: "Like a bird which escapes from its cage, the majority who leave don't come back to their wat, even to visit and keep in touch." This truth must be matched against a countertruth that may appear paradoxical at first sight: Those laymen who are today most closely associated with the capital's wat have frequently been monks or novices themselves, usually in the wat with which they are currently involved. There is a large range of tasks for which laymen are essential to the wat: the organization of rituals, festivals, and wat fairs, the management of fund-raising campaigns and the actual collection or receiving of funds and writing up accounts, the role of lay helper in the conduct of cremations at the wat's crematorium (especially the decoration and arrangement of the *sala*, instruction to the bereaved about ritual details and sequences, notification of government about death before storing the corpse in the morgue, etc.). Apart from these roles, there is the need for laymen versed in the details of worship and in the Pali chants to act as congregation leaders, preparing the place of worship, requesting from monks on the congregation's behalf the precepts, and leading the congregation in worship and in giving thanks: The chief male and female laymen entrusted with such tasks are called *makhanayok wat* and *mahanayika wat*. The most vital lay role for a wat is that of the treasurer and accountant of the wat's finances (*waiyawachakon*), and most wat try to secure an illustrious ex-monk or novice who is a lawyer or a successful businessman to take on this role. These laymen are essential for wat to discharge their duties to the world: They act as intermediaries between the wat and monks and the lay congregation in general, and, in certain matters,[9] with the government and state as well.

[9] The role of ex-monks as mediators and intermediaries has been reported for Ayutthaya by Jane Bunnag (1973). The ex-monks she discusses are those who become petty government officials of a clerical level and who mediate between the wat and the superior officers like *nai-amphur*, and so on. In Bangkok-Thonburi, however, we get

Biography of an Unknown Ex-Monk

Khun Vijakkamchawna, aged 40, is a good example of a monk turned layman, who made a fairly successful transfer to lay life, and who still has close ties with his wat in Thonburi, where he formerly resided as a monk.

Khun Vijak was born in Phitsanulok province; his parents were farmers; he was the fourth of seven children (four daughters, three sons). His brothers died when they were quite young, and although he was the only surviving son, his parents did not stand in the way of his pursuing his career because "they were glad he was leaving the village to study."

Khun Vijak attended his village primary school, passed *prathom* 4 and then rather than go to a secondary school studied *naktham* (as a lay student) at Wat Kabang Mangalalaam in Phitsanulok for four years. He followed the extraordinary course of being ordained novice before each *naktham* examination and leaving soon afterward. Thus he eventually attained *naktham ek*, having been ordained three times in the process.

But after the third time he did not disrobe, but as a novice came to reside in Wat Thongnopakun. The mode of his coming to the wat was not unusual: A monk from the same locality who was also a *lug phuphi* (cousin) came to Wat Kabang to give a sermon, and he met Vijak there and invited him to come to Thonburi to reside in his wat and to study Pali. This intermediary *luang phi** monk was 28 years old.

At Wat Thong, Vijak made satisfactory progress and in the course of four years passed three Pali examinations, the final one being *prayog* 5. At this time *prayog* 5 was recognized by the government as being equivalent to *matayom* 3 (lower-secondary leaving certificate), and Vijak now being a young man of 25 decided to disrobe.

A fellow monk at Wat Thong who was older than Vijak helped him to get a job as a typist at a government institute (Raadbanditsathan). Subsequently, the National Library at Bangkok invited candidates for a training course; Vijak took the course and successfully passed it. He was now in a position to succeed in his objective of becoming a government officer of the *lowest grade* (*khaa ratchakaan chan jathawa*). He still works at the library as a petty white-collar official.

On leaving the wat he continued to reside near it, even after his marriage. His friend at Wat Thong, who found him his first job and whom he still addresses as *luang phi*, is now in charge of running the crematorium and of making arrangements for the conduct of cremations (such as selecting the monks who will chant, making available temple property necessary for the rite, such as statues, ornamental casket, tables, chairs, etc.). Vijak acts as his lay helper on a voluntary basis, being the intermediary between the wat and the lay bereaved. He prepares the *sala*, attends to the *suad mon* ceremony arrangements, instructs the bereaved, welcomes their guests, supervises the actual cremation, and afterward attends to the return of the property borrowed. He performs this role for most cremations (or funerals, as in the case of many Chinese clients) conducted at the wat, even if they

examples of more dramatic mobility from peasant background to high-ranking government officials.

* *Luang phi*, respected elder brother.

fall on holidays. As I said before, Vijak does this work voluntarily because he is a friend of the monk and is attached to his former wat.

Vijak's contact with his natal locality in Phitsanulok is irregular and sporadic. He last visited his home village two years ago. He is more truly a citizen of the capital, and his relation to Wat Thong is an important part of his identity. He is of particular interest to us because it is ex-monks like him who have achieved a certain amount of social mobility from villager and peasant to urban petty white-collar worker via the monastery, who comprise the majority of ex-monks, and from whose ranks come those who maintain strong connections with their wat.

Biography of an Ex-Monk and a Retired Policeman, Now a Pious Congregation Leader

Khun Kaew Sangsawat, now 67 years old, devoting much of his time as a retired policeman in pious worship, is a colorful and illuminating example of the Thai ethos, in which a man can move from monkhood to a policeman's occupation and be strongly devoted to his ex-wat at the same time. The remarkable thing is that this man who as a monk was a failed academic and now is a retired policeman is the only male (or sometimes one of two males) who regularly attends the *wanphra* (Buddhist Sabbath) services and leads the congregation, composed primarily of old women and a sprinkling of young women, in the chanting, singing in his cracked but high nasal voice with a piety and mien characteristic of a mild recluse.

Khun Kaew was born in Sawankalok district in the historic province of Sukothai. Kaew was the younger of two sons. His parents owned land and were farmers, but his father also briefly took employment as a prison official at Sawankalok. Later they moved to Paknam *tambon*, near Thonburi, where his parents farmed. But his parents died when he was quite young (his mother when he was 3 and his father when Kaew was 12), and both boys were entrusted to the care of a grandmother.

Kaew was dispatched as a young boy of 12 by his grandmother to Wat Paknam as a temple boy to undergo primary education for about 5 years. He then farmed for about 5 years, and decided to be ordained as monk.

In taking this step he was following in the footsteps of his elder brother, who had been a novice and was now an ordained monk at Wat Anongkaram in Thonburi. From Wat Paknam, Kaew kept in touch with his brother, and through the good office of the abbot of Wat Anong (which already was full) he managed to find a place in the nearby Wat Thongnopakum.

Kaew remained a monk at Wat Thong for 10 years, during which time he managed to pass the first two *naktham* exams (*thri* and *tho*), but he failed to pass the third. Although he studied some Pali, he did not pass any *parian* exams. He clearly was not a success as a student, and he left monkhood to become a vendor of rice, fruit, and groceries in the market at Donmuang (Bangkok). But within two years he joined the police force as a cadet, and after a year's training he was posted to the Rajprasong Police Training School in Bangkok, where he worked for 26 years, reaching eventually the rank of sergeant.

While a policeman he frequently attended the calendrical festivals and many *wanphra* devotions at his former wat. But it is after his retirement that his devotion to religion increased and his association with Wat Thong strengthened. While I was doing fieldwork in 1971, I found that Kaew attended *wanphra* regularly (usually he was the only lay male present). He acted as the leader of the congregation, his special function being requesting the precepts and the sermon, and so on; he acted as an informal *makhayanok wat*. He also dutifully observed the eight precepts on *wanphra*, staying in the *sala* all day and night and returning home the next morning. In 1971 he sponsored the ordination of a monk at Wat Thong, and this cost him some 400–500 baht ($20–25).

Kaew married soon after leaving the sangha, and he has a son and two daughters. He lives with his son, who is 32 years old and also a policeman at the Rajprasong Police Training School. It is interesting to note that Kaew's son more or less followed in his father's footsteps but in a different wat. At the age of 20 this boy was ordained monk at a wat in Phrakhanong (a suburb of Bangkok where Kaew was residing); he was a monk for 10 years, then disrobed to marry and to become a police private.

Biography of Khun Khedmanee, Ex-Monk, Retired Government Official and Lay Helper of a Wat

Khun Khedmanee (hereafter Khun K) now 68 years of age, was born in Lamyai *tambon*, Amphur Muang, Samutsongkhram province. His father was a fisherman, and the family moved to Petchaburi when he was 6 years old. His early career is replicated by those of many others: Eldest of six children (the third being also a boy), he finished his primary education and, after helping to teach at his village school, decided to be ordained as a novice in his late teens. The abbot of the village wat in Petchaburi sponsored his ordination, and within two years he passed *naktham thri*. He then came to the capital to reside in Wat Thongnopakun (Thonburi). The mode of his coming to the capital is familiar: A monk from Wat Thong went to Petchaburi to cremate his mother, and he stayed at Khun K's wat with his friend, who was Khun K's *khana* (residential group) leader and *achan*. Khun K's move to the capital was easily arranged. Khun K subsequently returned to Petchaburi to be ordained as monk, the abbot of the temple again acting as his sponsor and *upacha* (ordainer), and then once more he came to Thonburi, this time for good.

He was a monk at Wat Thong for some 13 years, and he attained to the position of *phrakhru bhaidiga* in the temple hierarchy, his task being to oversee and supervise the arrangements for *wan phra* worship and rituals held in the *sala gaan parian*.* He then left to join the Department of Railways in Bangkok as a low-level clerk and gradually worked his way up. Just before retiring, after some 25 years of service, he was getting a salary of 1600 baht ($80) a month.

Though Khun K left the wat, he did not move far away from it. In fact

* Despite its literal meaning, this building, in the form of a hall, is in all Bangkok wat used for worship and rituals, the *bot* being used for special rites and important occasions.

he lives with his wife and his married son's family, only a few yards from Wat Thong. The house actually belongs to his wife, who as an only child inherited it from her parents. The marriage was a late occurrence on both sides, both marrying at the age of 40. Their only son, 28 years old, works as a minor official in the Department of Roads in Bangkok.

What is of particular interest to us is the kind of continuing relationships Khun K (and his wife) have with Wat Thong. Khun K plays an important role as lay helper in the staging of rites and festivals at the wat. He described himself as *pithikon*, and as an ex-monk he helps laymen to stage religious rites and in the process makes some money for himself as well. He and his family make, on order, flower decorations and wreaths and packets of ceremonial articles (flowers, candles, and incense sticks), which are used for the mortuary rites staged at the wat. In addition to this, he freely gives his time and services to the wat whenever it stages its rites and festivals. Thus, for example, at *khao phansa* (beginning of Lent) in 1971, Khun K put numbers on the packets of gifts and bathing cloths that merit makers contributed and also prepared the lottery tickets that would decide which monks will get which packets. At *og phansa* (end of Lent) he helped to make arrangements for the ceremony of filling the monks' bowls with food (*takbat*).

Now that he is retired, Khun K spends a great deal of time visiting and conversing with monks.

Faced with the difficult problem of gathering systematic information on the careers of ex-monks and novices (I repeat that temporary monks and novices are not under consideration here), I decided to secure at least some strategic kinds of evidence that would give us insights into the kind of social mobility achieved by them.

I shall report three kinds of strategic evidence. The first concerns the occupations that are being followed by monks and novices who formerly resided in a Thonburi wat before vacating their religious status. The period of time being referred to is recent (1966–1969). This information should deal with a cross-section of monks and novices – educationally successful and not successful, with relatively long or short periods of service – though the number considered would be small. It should also enable us to estimate the proportion of a wat's personnel who leave annually during the period under scrutiny. The second kind of evidence relates to the proportions of Mahachulalongkorn University's graduates who disrobed after getting their degrees and the occupations they are following. The third kind is a description of the personnel (and an account of some of their biographies) who manned in 1971 the Department of Religious Affairs (in the Ministry of Education). This is the government department that administers many aspects of the sangha's affairs and acts as the link between sangha and state: It is of particular interest to us because it actively recruits educated ex-monks on the presumption that they understand the needs and ways of the sangha and therefore would be appropriate to handle the department's tasks. This policy of recruitment is an old one.

The Fate of Ex-Monks Who Formerly Resided Recently at Wat Thongnopakun

Wat Thongnopakun, located in Thonburi on the left bank of the Chao Phraya river, is a relatively small wat, which has a fairly good reputation for its interest in promoting traditional-type monastic dhamma and Pali education and for its stringent observance of the *vinaya* rules of conduct. In 1966 it had (inclusive of newly ordained temporary monks who constitute about 20% of the total) 51 monks and 6 novices; in 1967, 50 monks and 15 novices; in 1968, 46 monks and 19 novices; in 1969, 43 monks and 17 novices. During the three-year period 1966–1969 none of the novices disrobed (these were all from the provinces pursuing their education, and those who became 21 were duly given higher ordination), 3 of the regular monks died in old age; 4 regular monks left to go to other wat,[10] and a total of 9 regular monks disrobed and joined lay society.

Table 14.1 gives some details concerning these monks: their age and educational qualification at the time of leaving and, wherever possible, the

Table 14.1. *Some details concerning nine ex-monks who previously resided in Wat Thongnopakun, 1966–1969 (educational qualification at time of leaving)*

Number	Age at which disrobed	*Naktham* level passed	Pali grade passed*	Present occupation
1	32	*Ek*	6	Teacher in secondary school in Chachoengsao province, which is not his province of birth
2	30	*Tho*	4	Works as "ungazetted" low-level official in National Library, Bangkok
3	30	*Ek*	6	Primary schoolteacher in natal province of Srisaket
4	25	*Tho*	3	Works in a bookshop and also as part-time chauffeur in Bangkok-Thonburi
5	27	*Ek*	9	Captain in the Royal Thai Air Force
6	27	*Ek*	4	Postman in GPO, Bangkok
7	22	*Ek*	4	Trader in Bangkok; his wife runs a grocery shop
8	36	*Ek*	5	Returned to birthplace in Singhaburi province – occupation unknown
9	21	*Tho*	–	Fate unknown

* Naktham qualifications range from *naktham thri* (lowest), *naktham tho*, to *naktham ek* (highest); *parian* grades (*prayog*) from 3 (lowest) to 9 (highest).

[10] Two returned to their natal village or commune in the provinces, and the other two found places in other wat in the capital; of the latter category, one was invited to become a teacher at the new wat's monastic school.

occupation they are currently following. We should note that all the nine regular monks in question actually joined the sangha as novices. While they have left it at various times between the ages of 21 and 36, it is clear that the older the monk is (say late twenties or early thirties rather than early twenties), the more highly educated he is likely to be. We can also confirm the fact that it is useful for a monk to have a Pali *parian* qualification of grade 5 or above, which assures him a post as a teacher or minor government official.

The Graduates of Mahachulalongkorn Ecclesiastical University

A small number of graduates are annually produced by Mahachulalongkorn University; over the years it has increased, and currently it is around 40 graduates each year. The ecclesiastical authorities are well aware that graduate monks constitute a problem. Unless they are given an active and creative role commensurate with their education and ability within the sangha, many of them are bound to disrobe, for attractive opportunities await them in the secular world. Given a hierarchical society, where relative age, generational differences, and seniority of ordination are important criteria of status within the sangha, it is inevitable that young monks would not be permitted the elbow room and opportunities to manage affairs to the extent they want.

On graduation today, young monks have the following courses open to them:

1. To try to go abroad, particularly to India (to universities such as Benares, Baroda, Calcutta, Nalanda), in order to work for a higher degree in some aspect of Buddhist studies;
2. To teach in one of the ecclesiastical universities or in some other ecclesiastical educational institution;
3. To participate in the *thammathud* (missionary) program, which includes teaching the dhamma, promoting community development, and so on, in the provinces and to the hill tribes (see Chapter 18);
4. To disrobe and find a lay occupation. The lay occupations that graduates can reasonably aspire to and which they find to be consonant with their past careers and training are teaching in secular schools (primary and secondary) and even in higher-level institutions; army chaplaincy (with the rank of an officer, usually captain); government civil servant, the most popular department being the Department of Religious Affairs.

Of course it must be realized that monks who elect to follow the first three courses of action may follow them only for a certain period of time at the end of which they may elect to disrobe and take their places in lay society. This is indeed a powerful trend, and it should be realized that the first three courses of action are merely holding or stalling operations. The chances of disrobing increase with age, up to a point in the late thirties. Nevertheless, a large proportion – probably up to one-half – does continue as monks as a lifelong vocation.

Now for some details, which were collected in late 1971:

1962: Twelve monks graduated from Mahachulalongkorn. Of these, 8 have continued as monks; 4 have disrobed: 2 became teachers in teacher-training colleges, 1 in a secondary school, and 1 is studying for a master's degree in India.

1969–1970: There were 38 monk-graduates. Up to date, 7 have disrobed already (2 after brief periods of teaching at Mahachulalongkorn, and 1, a Lao monk, after teaching in Laos). It is surmised that most of them became teachers in secular schools and chaplains in the armed forces.

1970–1971: There were 39 monk-graduates, among whom 3 have already given up their robes: One is a teacher in a Bangkok secondary school, another works in a Bangkok commercial bank, and the third is a Laotian who has returned to his country. What has happened to the remaining 36 monks soon after their graduation? It was reported that:[11]

Seventeen had gone upcountry to participate as teachers in the University's missionary program, the usual period of service being one or two years.

Seven were taken on as instructors at Mahachulalongkorn University.

Nine went to India for further study.

Two Laotian monks are teaching in Laos in ecclesiastical schools for higher education.

One went to Malaysia to engage in missionary activities.

A rough prediction by those who know is that in due course one-half of the monks will disrobe. With regard to the information I have given, perhaps that pertaining to 1962 is a better basis for judging trends. Although only one-third of the graduates of that year have disrobed, we may get a more rounded picture by inquiring into the subsequent history of the 11 scholars in the traditional stream who passed the highest Pali grade (*prayog* 9) in 1961: By 1971, the majority, 7 in all, had discarded their robes to become army chaplains and officers in the Department of Religious Affairs (1 was studying in the United States for a higher degree).

Comparing the fates of monks who acquired the traditional highest Pali qualification and monks who graduated at the two universities, one is tempted to say that the latter have more scope for finding creative and satisfying positions while remaining in robes – as teachers and administrators of the universities, as organizers and participants in the activistic missionary program, and so on. Nevertheless, the sangha has to be resigned to losing a large proportion of its educated monks to the wider society.

The Biography of Khun S

Khun S is a good example of a graduate monk who has found a worthy and enviable position in lay society, and his career illustrates the kind of social mobility that awaits the educated ex-monk.

[11] This information was provided by Phra Sri Wisudhimoli, and he cautioned that it may not be altogether exact.

He is now 36 years old and is a lecturer in sociology in the department of humanities and social sciences at a teachers' college (the country's premier teachers' college that was recently given university status).

Khun S was born in northeastern Thailand in Loei province. His parents were peasant farmers and are now dead. He received his primary education in a village school (Baan Thasalaa, Amphur Muang) and, after spending a few years at home, became a novice at the age of 17 at Wat Srisaat, in the same district. There he assiduously studied *naktham* and passed the third examination (*naktham ek*), which now made him eligible to look for better educational opportunities elsewhere.

In 1953 he came to Bangkok in order to study Pali and found a place in the Thammayut wat called Wat Sampannawong (Wat Gong), located in Bangkok's commercial sector of Jawarad. Having successfully passed the third Pali examination (*prayog* 6), he became entitled to join Mahamakut Ecclesiastical University, where at the age of 27 he secured the B.A. degree (*Sasana Sad Bandit*).

He was able to win a scholarship offered by Mahamakut University to study at the Benares Hindu University in India. There he studied sociology and secured the master's degree; in addition he took a postgraduate diploma in Indian history and culture. On his return from India, still a monk, he taught at Mahamakut University for two years, and then he disrobed. He succeeded in getting a post at the aforementioned teachers' college, which gives him prestigious status as a university teacher. He continues, however, to act as part-time lecturer at the ecclesiastical university.

Khun S's mobility is both remarkable and typical in relation to other graduate ex-monks. Not only were his parents farmers, but his own siblings remain farmers. He has two surviving brothers, one older and one younger. The older brother is a farmer in his natal village in Loei, and so is his younger brother. The older brother had been a monk in the village for three to four years; the younger has never been ordained. (An older sister died young after marrying a farmer, and so did another brother, at 20, who also was a farmer.) Khun S alone in this peasant family, choosing a path that involved 3 years as novice and 13 years as monk, has moved in space to the country's capital city and to a social position that gives him professional status.

Ex-Monks at the Department of Religious Affairs

The functions and organization of the Department of Religious Affairs will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, and that account will make evident why this arm of the secular administrative service is an appropriate place for educated ex-monks to find positions of civil service rank. The department after all is a unit within the Education Ministry and is by no means large: For example, it reported that in 1967 it employed 116 lay officers.

In 1971, when this inquiry was made, it was conspicuously clear that the department was in the control of ex-monks. Let us look at the higher levels of office:

1. The director general of religious affairs – Colonel Pin Mutukan – had been a monk in a Bangkok wat (of the Thammayut sect) for some eight

years; he then left the order and joined the army as a chaplain,[12] where he worked his way up to the rank of colonel. He was later promoted to director general of religious affairs.

2. At the next level of office, of the seven chiefs of divisions all but one were ex-monks. (The exception was the chief of the secretariat of the Sangha Supreme Council, who had however been a temporary monk, or *navaga*, in his time.) While all these six chiefs of division acquired their education in monastic schools, four of them, after disrobing, went on to take higher degrees in the secular system. They were aided in this course of action by their having the requisite Pali grade, which allowed them to enter a university (the popular one being Thammasat University) and study for a diploma or a B.A. Thus four of the six ex-monk chiefs followed this course of action: The chief of religious services acquired a diploma in law at Thammasat, while the remaining three (the chiefs of the ecclesiastical property division, the religious development division, and the moral education division) went a step further and secured Bachelor of Law degrees at Thammasat. (Indeed, the last chief mentioned here went even further, to get an M.A.)

3. The third bureaucratic stratum consisted of 25 chiefs of sections (sections being subdivisions of divisions). Although I did not conduct a stringent survey on the background of these chiefs, I was informed by officers of the department that at least one-half of these section chiefs were ex-monks of the regular type and had acquired their education while serving as novices and monks.

Let us now turn to qualitative information and study the careers of two chiefs of division, and of two younger officers, both brothers, in order to see how the conversion was made from monkhood to government officer.

The Career of Lieutenant Colonel Prasarn Thongbakdi, LL.B., M.A., Chief of the Division of Religious Development, Department of Religious Affairs (1971)

The early part of Prasarn's career is typical in many details. He was born of farming parents who lived in Ubon province (northeast). He was the third of four children; the eldest, a sister, married a farmer; the second, a brother, is now a teacher in a village primary school in Ubon – he had been a monk himself for 15 years and had passed *naktham tho* before leaving; the youngest, a sister, has also married a farmer. All his siblings are now dead, and he alone among them achieved dramatic social mobility and occupational success.

[12] The Thai word *anusasanachan* is translated by Thais as "chaplain." In case an English reader is puzzled by this term in a Buddhist context, he should note that unlike in Christianity it would be inappropriate for a Buddhist monk to be associated with a group associated with violence and warfare. In Thailand chaplains are laymen who are employed to instruct soldiers in religious and moral matters, which is why ex-monks are considered suited to the office.

Prasarn, after completing his primary education in his village school, was ordained a novice at 14 at his village wat (Wat Baanakamyai). After a year he came to Bangkok; his *achan* at the village wat had a friend living in Wat Prathumanaram who in turn found him a place; the village as a whole put up the money as an act of merit for his and his *achan*'s train fare to Bangkok. As a novice, Prasarn passed *naktham ek* and *parian prayog* 5, thereby demonstrating his ability.

When it was time to be ordained, a lay sponsor in the city volunteered to pay the ordination expenses; this patron was a professor of medicine and director general of the Thai Red Cross. Prasarn successfully passed *prayog* 8, but the very highest Pali qualification (*prayog* 9) eluded him, for he failed the examination four times. At this time he was a teacher at his own wat but went for his Pali instruction to Wat Mahathad and Wat Benchamabopit, two of the most famous wat in Bangkok.

Prasarn disrobed in 1945 when he was 27 years old. He joined the army as a chaplain, and while serving there he studied law at Thammasat University and obtained the LL.B. He next became an instructor in law in the military academy, and also took an M.A. in political science at Thammasat. After 15 years of teaching at the military academy and reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he was promoted in 1964 to the position of chief of the division of ecclesiastical education at the Department of Religious Affairs (and was subsequently transferred to his present position as chief of the moral education division).*

Lieutenant Colonel Prasarn is in charge of activities that are most important for the role of the sangha and Buddhism in modern society. The *thammathud* activity, whereby "missionary" monks are sent out to propagate both religion and community development, is administered by his division. The program is devised so that, as Prasarn has put it, "Buddhism can serve National Development 100 per cent." He is also president of the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand; this association propagates religion to the youth and devises various programs to engage their interest: for example, teaching dhamma to them through lectures at "Sunday schools," through radio and television programs, and so forth. These activities are held at various wat in the capital. Also Prasarn has founded a center for students from universities and teacher-training colleges at Wat Novannaksuntharik. In this way the youth, monks, and religion are brought together into closer relation.

The Career of Khun Chaleo Thamniyom, Chief of Religious Services Division

The career of Khun Chaleo Thamniyom, who was 59 years old in 1971, has its own special features and also highlights some of the mechanisms by which monks are helped on their way by material aid from eminent or affluent and unrelated urban lay patrons, for whom support of monks is an aspect of charity and philanthropy.

* In 1973 he was promoted again to the position of deputy director of the department.

Khun Chaleo is entirely of Chinese parentage – his father was a poor tobacco trader. Born in a village in Petchaburi province, his parents could not afford to educate him. He was ordained a novice at his village wat, and while a novice he dreamed that "the Buddha image in the *bod* told me that he would like me to become his disciple (*sawok*). I also saw Moggallana and Sariputta standing beside him, and so I asked whether the Buddha did not have enough disciples already . . . then I woke up." However, he disrobed soon afterward.

A fellow villager who was a monk at Wat Kanmathuyaram in the city visited the village and brought Khun Chaleo with him as his *dekwat*. Khun Chaleo went to school, passed *matayom* 2 (lower secondary), and then became a novice again at 15. He was destined to do so by virtue of his dream.

When in due course he was ordained a monk, the sponsor of his ordination (*chao paab*) was an eminent lady of the Bunnak family who was (according to Khun Chaleo) a *chao phraya's* daughter and the wife of an ambassador. After his ordination she continued to be a lay patron (*yom upathat*), giving him six baht per month as pocket money. Khun Chaleo said that as a monk he had two other female patrons who gave him gifts and money regularly – one was the sister of the aforementioned patron and was the wife of a Thai ambassador abroad; and the second was the wife of a businessman.

Khun Chaleo passed *prayog* 6 while a monk for some five years, which entitled him to enter Thammasat University, which he did after disrobing. He secured a diploma in law and began his career as a clerk in the Ministry of Education at 20 baht per month. After 13 years of service he was promoted to officer, third class, and was assigned to the Department of Religious Affairs. He has worked there ever since, being promoted to second class in 1954 and to first class in 1964. After 20 years of service in the department he is now (1971) chief of the religious services division, on the whole a successful, if painstaking, career.

The information we have on Khun Chaleo permits us to see not only the social distance between the boy of peasant origins who achieves a meteoric rise and his farming or laboring siblings but also the kind of permanent advantages the successful ex-monk transmits to his own children. Khun Chaleo was the second among four children (excluding two daughters who died while young). The first, a sister, married a lorry driver; the third, a brother, worked in the Highway Department as a fourth-class government employee*; the fourth, a sister, is married to a shopkeeper (selling groceries) in Bangkok.

Khun Chaleo, in comparison, a high-ranking civil servant, whose house is situated off the street called Sukhumvit, Bangkok's most desirable residential location, has two sons by his marriage. The first is a graduate of Kasetsart University and, as a biologist, worked as a third-class officer in the Department of Science, Ministry of Industries. The second son is a student at Ramkhamhaeng University.

* According to the Thai ranking system, the lowest position for an officer is third class.

The Careers of Two Brothers Who Are Ex-Monks

This biographical account is remarkable because two brothers following the same path have eventually done well as civil servants. We have had a couple of examples already of two brothers who served as regular monks (e.g., see the biographies of Khun Kaew Sangsawat and Lieutenant Colonel Prasarn Thongbakdi), but in neither case did both brothers achieve a high position after disrobing.

In this account Khun Sunthorn is the younger brother, aged 38; he is a second-class officer in the Department of Religious Affairs; his elder brother, Captain Suparb, is a second-class officer and the head of a section in the ecclesiastical property division. The facts reported here were given by Khun Sunthorn.

Sunthorn's parents were farmers (*chaona*) in Bankong *tambon*, Amphur Muang, Khon Khaen province (northeastern Thailand). They had five children: The first, a son, is a farmer in the natal commune (he was ordained a temporary monk for one Lent); the second, a daughter, is married to a farmer in the same commune; the third is Captain Suparb; the fourth is a daughter, again married to a farmer at Bangkong *tambon*; the fifth is Khun Sunthorn, our informant.

Let us begin with Captain Suparb's career. Ordained a novice at Wat Srichan in his home district, he found a place in Wat Boromnivat (a Thammayut wat in Bangkok). The abbot of Wat Srichan was also the provincial ecclesiastical governor of Khon Khaen; he had previously himself resided in Bangkok at Wat Boromnivat and knew its abbot intimately. Through this network a place was easily found for Suparb. After service as novice for three years, he was ordained monk, in which status he remained for seven years making good use of his opportunities. After completing the requisite Pali grade (*prayog* 6) he entered Mahamakut Ecclesiastical University and succeeded in getting a B.A. degree.

He then left the sangha to become at the age of 27 an army chaplain (*anusasanachan*), in the same office where the present director general himself worked. In due course Suparb followed the latter to the Department of Religious Affairs and is now head of the central property estate section. While working here Suparb (who had achieved the rank of captain while serving as chaplain) began further studies at Thammasat University and has secured a B.A. degree in social science.

Suparb married a girl who also came from Khon Khaen province; she is a teacher in a government school. The couple have four children.

Now for Sunthorn's career. The younger brother followed closely in the footsteps of his elder brother. Ordained novice at 13, at Wat Srichan, he arrived in Bangkok at Wat Boromnivat using the same network of sponsors. In Bangkok, like many other poor provincial novices, his ordination at the age of 21 as monk was sponsored by an unrelated patron of the wat. Sunthorn's academic capabilities were not equal to those of his brother. He passed *prayog* 4, then joined Mahamakut Ecclesiastical University and studied there for seven years, eventually getting in 1961 the diploma (*Saw Baw Sasana Saat Bandit*).

He then disrobed (after 10 years of monkhood) and worked for 4 years

in some commercial firms as a salesman of television and radio sets, clocks, and watches. After this somewhat unsatisfactory period, he was able to find work in the Department of Religious Affairs (where his brother was already situated). His connections there helped him first to work as a research assistant (on research into Buddhism headed by the director general) and afterward to find more permanent employment there four years ago, first as a fourth-class official and now promoted to third class.

Sunthorn is married; his wife was born in Bangkok, and she teaches in a private school. They have two children at present.

We can conclude this section on the careers of educated ex-monks with two observations:

1. While it is true that a few ex-monks have gone into occupations and activities far removed from their religious past – I personally know of a journalist, a member of Parliament (before dissolution in 1971 of the legislative assembly), a high-ranking official of the Tourist Organization of Thailand, and an aide of the now deceased Prime Minister Sarit – yet by and large they have tended to go into teaching (ranging from schools to universities), ecclesiastical administration, and army chaplaincies (and cognate activities). These activities accord very well with those that King Mongkut more than a century ago defined as suitable for ex-monks, particularly as scribes, pundits, and ecclesiastical administrators. (It must be noted, however, that there are ex-monks who are civil servants outside the sphere of ecclesiastical administration, but their number cannot be ascertained.)[13]

2. A remarkable feature about all the ex-monks I have met, irrespective of the positions they fill and the occupations they follow now in lay society, is that they have entered upon marriage fairly soon after disrobing and have adjusted to marriage apparently with ease. One is tempted to wonder whether a fairly long period of celibacy (until the age of 30–35 years) does interfere with a subsequent active sex life in marriage. One can only speculate on the reasons for the ease with which an ex-monk settles into married life. I myself would suggest that one of the reasons lies in the pattern and frequency of a monk's or novice's contact with the laity, especially with women, who are their most devoted material providers and conversational partners. From a doctrinal point of view a monk or novice must renounce sex and must not be intimate with or enter into compromising relations with women. The monks and novices under discussion seem to observe these rules with care. Yet it is also true that women seem to have more social contact with monks and novices than other men. Attend *wan phra* ceremonies in any wat in Bangkok-Thonburi (or anywhere else in the country) and you will find that the women worshipers far outnumber men; ask monks and novices from whom they usually receive their daily food and

[13] One informant, Khun Sunthorn, estimated that about 10 percent of government officers were ex-monks.

material gifts, who their lay patrons (*yom upathat*) are, and they will usually name more women than men; inquire from monks who have specialized in astrology or are renowned in the performance of certain prosperity-conferring rituals, and once again the majority of clients named will be women of all social positions. In other words, what I am suggesting is that the renunciation of sex life does not involve for the religious a discontinuation of active social dealings with women. Herein lies, I would suggest, why monks and novices can resume a normal life with women, get married, and have children when they leave the sangha. One monk, when asked why so many of the educated monks leave the wat and return to a lay life, cracked a joke that contains more than a grain of truth that when a monk passes the highest examinations in Pali or becomes a university graduate, women find his "flesh scented" (*nya horm*) and therefore entice him back into lay life and marriage.

While I am conscious of the fact that the theme of monkhood as a vocation with educational commitments, as an avenue of social mobility and of successful conversion to lay life, both in an occupational and domestic-marital sense, applies to a select category of Thai monks,[14] nevertheless, remembering that they are numerically not insignificant I offer the previous discussion not so much as disproof but as a counterweight to Spiro's somewhat speculative assertion as regards Burmese monks that the unconscious emotional characteristics of "dependency, narcissism and emotional timidity" (and latent homosexuality) tend to distinguish monks from nonmonks and "provide at least part of the unconscious motivational dispositions for recruitment to the Order" (Spiro 1970, p. 338). The Thai monks we have discussed are not unique and must surely have their Burmese counterparts. And, in any case, the import of these sociological facts that so powerfully and directly present themselves to our observation should be recognized in any comprehensive account.

This is also a convenient point to comment on another hypothesis of Spiro that he advanced on the basis of data on 19 monks. As explanation for the alleged "need for dependency" of monks, Spiro advances three factors: "the monks in the sample came from larger families, most of them were middle children, and finally a third of the monks had a disruptive relationship, either physical or emotional, with their parents . . ." (p. 341).

We have somewhat better data for Thailand than was at Spiro's disposal for partially testing the alleged role of one of the preceding factors in creating dependency needs – that being a middle child, in a Burmese family, is to be "typically frustrated by older siblings . . ." (p. 341). The fact is that of a sample of some 324 monks studying at Bangkok's Mahachulalongkorn University, only 25 percent were middle or nearly middle children

[14] In this respect the powerful example of a national hero and historic personage, King Mongkut, who politically was vigorous and also had numerous children by his many queens and concubines, should also be kept in mind.

Table 14.2. *Responding monks' position in order of birth of siblings*

	Number	Percent
Oldest	69	21.3
Youngest	37	11.4
Middle or near middle*	82	25.3
Other	132	40.7
n.a.	4	1.2
Total	324	100.00

* The second and third in a family of four children, the third and fourth in a family of six children, and so on, were respectively coded as near middle.

(Table 14.2). However 66 percent were children other than the oldest or the youngest.

Jane Bunnag found in her sample of some 90 monks resident in Ayutthaya that the average number of children in the parental families of monks (5.75) did not differ significantly from the average family size in the villages (5.6) and towns (5.4) of central Thailand and that there was no discernible regularity as regards the monks' position in their families (1973, p. 192). (According to the 1970 population census the average household size for the whole country is 5.79, while the regional figures are 5.80 for the central region, 6.12 for the northeast, 5.46 for the north, and 5.51 for the south.)

Our own data, pertaining to the same sample of university monks (who came mainly from the provinces and were of farming origins), differ in one respect from Bunnag's in supporting Spiro's thesis that regular monks tend to come from larger families. The average number of children born per family in the sample was 6.6 (Table 14.3). The fact of largeness of family may be hypothesized as signifying more mouths to feed, availability of surplus labor, poverty – features that may impel or free a young boy to become a regular novice.

For whatever it is worth in assessing the motivations for recruitment to monkhood, I offer Table 14.4 for the same sample of monks. It informs us that in accordance with the widespread merit-making practice in Thailand of ordination to novicehood, many of the respondent monks had other male siblings undergo the same experience of ordination and recruitment. In other words, the act of ordination and recruitment into the sangha is fairly widespread (some 40% of the sample had one or more siblings ordained as monks, and some 20% had one or more siblings ordained as

Table 14.3. *Number of children born to parents of monk respondents**

Number of children born	Number of families	Percent of families
1	3	0.93
2	18	5.56
3	14	4.32
4	23	7.10
5	40	12.35
6	45	13.89
7	42	12.96
8	54	16.67
9 and over	81	25.00
n.a.	4	1.25
Total	324	100.00

* This table is admittedly crude in many respects. It does not tell us how many siblings died and at what ages; it does not tell us how many are complete and how many are incomplete families. Since the monks are all over 20, and about 67 percent are over 25, most can be taken as coming from completed families.

Table 14.4. *Number of brothers of respondent-monks ordained*

Number of brothers ordained	Respondent monks with: Brothers ordained as novice		Brothers ordained as monk		Brothers ordained as both novice and monk	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0	220	67.90	132	40.74	209	64.51
1	54	16.67	78	24.07	56	17.28
2	14	4.32	39	12.04	8	2.47
3	0	0	22	6.79	4	1.23
4 and more	2	.62	11	3.40	0	0
Not eligible (no brothers)	30	9.26	38	11.43	38	11.73
n.a.	4	1.24	4	1.24	9	2.78
Total	324	100.00	324	100.00	324	100.00

both novice and monk). What is special is the long-term continuation as novice and then monk.

Finally, we may throw into the pool Table 14.5, which has only an indirect bearing on the possibility of monks having had a disruptive physical relationship with their parents (Spiro, p. 341). We can at least infer that most of our respondents are not orphans.

Table 14.5. *Parents of respondent monks*

	Percent of respondents
Both parents living	55.56
Mother only alive	22.84
Father only alive	13.89
Both dead	6.17
n.a.	1.54
Total	100.00

15. Monastic Careers and Monastic Network

I have so far attempted to delineate the monastic educational network, its wide rural base in outlying provinces and its telescoping and narrowing toward the major cities. Let us now try to put some flesh on this skeleton by considering a few biographies of monks and novices. I present now four biographies, which are by no means atypical, to give us a wealth of qualitative detail denied us by quantitative measures.

Phra Maha T, Wat Chana Songkram, Banglampoo, Age 26 (1971)

I met Phra Maha T on July 11, 1971, and he freely talked about his career and his future plans.

He said that he was born in the village called Baan Daunthan, located in the *muang* district of Sakon Nakhon province, northeastern Thailand. He went to the village primary school, passed *prathom*-4 grade, and then was ordained a novice at the village wat (Wat Daunthan). After nine years of study as novice he was ordained monk at the age of 21.

While a novice he began moving to other wats, thereby furthering his education. He first went to a small wat in Nakhon Sawan province (Wat Phudamongkonimit), where he lived for two years, attending school at Wat Potharam, which he said was famous for Pali studies.

His next move, still as a novice, at the age of 18, was to Bangkok in 1962 (B.E. 2506) to Wat Chanasongkhram. He came to this particular wat in the capital because a friend of his, who was born like him in Sakon Nakhon and with whom as a novice he had attended the same wat school for *naktham* studies (while he resided in Wat Daunthan), had resided here. He wrote to this friend, who then invited T to come to Bangkok. The friend acted as T's contact and found him a place here.

Phra Maha T was able to pursue his Pali studies more efficiently in Bangkok and managed to pass three years later the first two Pali examinations (*prayog* 3 and 4), which entitled him to the title *maha* when he was ordained a monk.

He was ordained monk at 21, and it is noteworthy that his ordination was sponsored not by any of his poor and geographically distant kin but by a lay patron he came to know in Bangkok. (This is a common pattern among most of the rural boys who as novices have come to Bangkok to pursue their studies and are later ordained.)

While studying Pali in his own wat, he also began to attend Mahachula-

longkorn University (for monks and novices), which holds its classes in the afternoons. He was now (in 1971) in the first year of the two-year teacher-training course; if he successfully completes the course, next year he would get the upper ecclesiastical teacher certificate (which is equivalent to the upper *paw kaw saw* of the secular system). This certificate would entitle him to teach in schools, religious or secular, of various levels, from elementary to upper secondary.

Phra Maha T elaborated his future plans as follows. After securing the certificate next year (1972), he would very much like to go to India, particularly to Baroda University, to pursue further studies in education. The problem is to find a sponsor who would finance his travel and education in India; he hoped very much that he would find one. He explained that Mahachulalongkorn University in Bangkok had connections with many Indian universities, to which several Thai monks had gone to secure higher degrees. He himself would like to get the M.A. degree: He would need three years to get it, at the cost of about 600 baht (about $30) per month.

On his return from India he would disrobe and, ideally, would like to become a teacher at the teachers' college at Sakon Nakhon, his natal place. Failing this, he might like to go back to his village and be a teacher there; his village is small and poor, its primary school has four teachers; and he himself would like to impart knowledge (*khwam ru*) to the children.

At this point, T began to talk of his own family and childhood. He said he came from a poor farming family. His father died two years ago (1969) and his mother last year. He is the fifth child among eight children and has four sisters and three brothers, all of whom are either married to farmers or are farmers themselves. He was ordained novice according to custom, but among all his brothers he alone chose to and was motivated to pursue his studies.

Phra Maha T's career and his attitudes and ambitions give us some inkling of what may be common to many young monks in Bangkok: their rural poor peasant background; their moving from monastery to monastery, from village to town, to the metropolis along a network (T had made two moves to other wat from his initial village wat); the reliance on various kinds of relationships with other monks and sponsors in order to travel up the educational ladder; the intense ambition to complete university education, to go abroad to get more prestigious degrees, and to put this learning to use either in a religious or secular capacity, the latter course of action involving disrobing. These ambitions can only be realized by finding patrons and sponsors both within the monastic order sangha and among laymen. And ambition is spiced with love of travel and, in T's case, a dislike of Bangkok's bustle and teeming life and a nostalgia to return to his place of birth in the northeast.

Let us open a few other windows that will throw light on the monastic scene.

Samanera Wichian, Khana 3, Wat Thongnopakun, Age 19 (1971)

Wichian, a 19-year-old novice, is a paradigmatic example of an intelligent but poor rural boy who is successfully moving along the monastic network of educational institutions.

Wichian was born in the central region province of Rayong, in the district of Baankai, the village of Nauntabak. His parents were farmers; unfortunately, Wichian's father died when Wichian was scarcely a year old. Wichian was the youngest of three, his two elder siblings being sisters. The eldest is married to a farmer in Rayong; the next sister, 21 years old, is unmarried and helps the mother (who is now about 56 years old) to farm, while Wichian himself has left his needy family.

Rather than being a dispensable son in a large family, Wichian is the only son in a fatherless destitute family; and he has sought his career and better life by escaping and transcending his limited world.

Wichian became a *dekwat* (temple boy) at the age of seven, a monk in the village wat requesting his services and his mother assenting. As *dekwat* he was able to attend the primary school, which though government run was located in the compound of the village wat, and by the time he was 11 years old, he had completed the fourth grade (*prathom* 4).

At the completion of this grade, which technically qualified him to be ordained novice, Wichian was so ordained at the age of 12. He said that it was his own decision to become a novice. He very much wanted to continue his studies and go on to *prathom* grades 5, 6, and 7, but his family did not have the money to support him. He would have had to go to school elsewhere to study these grades, his village school being limited to the first four grades. Further studies would have also involved board, fees, and so on. His mother told him that the money was simply not available.

So Wichian was ordained a novice (*nen*) at his village wat (Wat Nauntabak). He resided there for five years, and within that time, by the age of 15, passed the highest *naktham* examination (*naktham ek*). He did not go to any religious school but studied under the personal supervision of a titled monk, Phrakhru N, with whom he had the teacher-pupil (*achan-luksit*) relationship.

Wichian was now ready to leave his village and seek better openings elsewhere, preferably in Bangkok. The village wat organized a merit-making ceremony to which they invited a Bangkok monk, Phrakhru P, who resided in Wat Thongnopakun in Thonburi. This monk was in fact born in Wichian's village; moreover, he was a relative (*pen yaad*). Wichian says he addresses him as *luang na* (*luang* = honorific; *na* = *mo yo br*). At this ceremony Wichian approached this visiting monk and requested that the latter find him a place in his Thonburi wat. Wichian said that the decision to go to the capital city was his own, to which his mother gave assent. Phrakhru P returned to Thonburi, spoke to the *chao khana* (the head of his residential grouping within the monastery) and secured his permission (and thereafter the permission of the abbot) for Wichian to come and reside in the same *khana*. (One may note here two important facts: Firstly, just as much as intelligent and ambitious young novices from the villages

seek a place in Bangkok, so do Bangkok monks periodically visit their villages and there recruit and sponsor promising novices to come to Bangkok to populate the monasteries there. Secondly, in any *large* urban monastery, the community is divided into residential groupings (*khana*) each in the charge of a leader [*chaokhana*] appointed by the abbot; it is the leader who virtually decides who will reside in his group, the abbot's subsequent ratification being a formality. But in smaller monasteries *khana* may not exist, or even if they exist, the abbot might act as the sole authority.)

Thus three years ago Wichian arrived in Thonburi. At the time I met him in 1971, he was into his fourth Lent (*phansa*) at Wat Thong. His primary activity as a novice is attending the Wat *pariyattithan* school, learning Pali there and passing the *prayog* exams. Wichian passed the first Pali exam (*prayog* 3) last year, and now he is studying for *prayog* 4. He would like to become a Pali scholar and pass the highest grade (*prayog* 9), but his eye is really fixed on the target of passing a lesser Pali exam (*prayog* 5) and then enrolling at the monks' university, Mahachulalongkorn; he also wants to begin the study of the English language.

When next year he reaches the age of 20, he would like to be ordained a monk. But he wants to be a monk for 10 *years only*. He envisages his return to his home province as a teacher at the conclusion of his education cum monastic career.

We may ask what kind of relationship Wichian has with the monk who found him a place in Wat Thong and in whose *khana* he also resides. There is no special educational teacher-pupil relationship between them, because Wichian attends the monastic school manned by scholar monks. However, the *phrakhru* is his moral adviser; even more importantly he acts as Wichian's patron and benefactor by giving the student novice about 20–30 baht from his own ritual 'earnings" to use as pocket money. In return, Wichian daily cleans the *phrakhru's khuti* (private sleeping cum sitting room), attends to his patron's needs, sees that his food is set out at lunch time, and acts as his factotum. Thus we see that young, able, and educationally motivated novices from the outer provinces are encouraged and sponsored to come to the larger and famous urban establishments; they are also qua poor scholars a junior category in monastic establishments attending to the needs and acting as the servants of the senior monks. Wichian is the only novice in his *khana*, which consists of five monks; however, he is helped by *dekwat* temple boys living in the *khana* and over whom he himself has authority.

Phra Ubali, Abbot of Wat Chakkravat, Age 75 (1971)

This phenomenon of the mobility of novices and monks along the monastic educational channels is by no means something recent in origin; at least this biography of a famous old monk – who is a member of the *Mahatherasamakhom* (the Council of Elders), the head of the northern division of the sangha, and the abbot of his wat – shows that the same network was operative at the turn of this century.

Phra Ubali (secular name Thee) was born in 1897 in Korat province in Nondaeng village, Taku *tambon* (commune), situated in the district of Pakthongchai. His parents, farmers, died when he was very young, his father when Phra Ubali was three years old and his mother when he was five. They had eight children, four of them dying when small. Thus of the four children who survived, Phra Ubali was the youngest. His oldest sister is dead; and of his two brothers the older surviving brother is a major in the Thai police force, while the other, now dead, migrated to Cambodia and became a farmer there.

When his parents died, the orphan was fostered in part by the eldest sister and in part by other relatives of the parents. It is alleged that when he was seven years old, he was employed for some five years as a cowherd, being paid in rice as his wage. Subsequently, an "aunt" named Rod took charge of him, and it was while living with her that he came into contact with the local monks and novices. He became a *dekwat* and the protégé of a monk called (*Phra Achan*) Samuma, of Wat Baantaku, who in 1900 put him in a school to study. Then the next year at the age of 14 he was ordained at his patron's wat as a novice.

Two years later he came to reside in a wat in Bangkok (Wat Changwangdit Ditsanukaram) in Vorachak. A relative of his (Achan Ngera) was already a monk there and found him a place. After seven months, however, he again changed residence and went to Wat Gaewchamfa (on Siphya Road), which was recommended to him by his older brother who was a policeman. While living in this wat, he went daily to the famous religious school run at Wat Thepsirin for three years to learn Pali; he also regularly attended *naktham* classes at various wat: He secured *naktham thri* at Wat Anongaram in 1914, and *naktham tho* from Wat Mahathat in 1917.*

He made his last and third residential move to Wat Chakkravat in B.E. 2461 (1918), where he took the fateful step of being ordained a monk. Phra Ubali described the circumstances leading to his ordination and to his choice of Wat Chakkravat thus: His *achan* (teacher) checked his horoscope and pronounced that he was well suited to the study of dhamma (Buddhist doctrine) and to becoming a monk. Ubali then had to make up his mind as to which wat would be most advantageous for him to seek admission for the pursuit of learning. He chose Wat Chakkravat in preference to other well-known wat because it was suitably located in the commercial district and presented no material problems. For example, Wat Mahathat, a prominent institution, being large, could not ensure daily food to its inmates; Wat Anongaram on the other hand was located too far away in Thonburi among gardens and waterways.

From Wat Chakkravat the enthusiastic young monk walked daily to Wat Mahathat to study Pali. Over a period of 16 years of steady study he passed the Pali exams, the crowning point being his passing the highest *prayog* 9 exam in 1938. At that time in Thailand there were only five other monks who shared this honor.

Thereafter, Phra Ubali's rise has been meteoric. He rose in the ranks within the wat as a personal assistant of the abbot and made his reputation as a teacher in the wat school. He was appointed abbot in B.E. 2497

* He secured the *naktham ek* some years later (1924).

(1954), ecclesiastical head of the northern region in B.E. 2509 (1966), and a member of the *Mahatherasamakhom* in B.E. 2512 (1969), which administers the sangha. His rise to fame need not be documented here in any detail.

What I wish to point out is that Phra Ubali's career not only shows that some 60 years ago he was treading a well-beaten path but also that it was customary for young monks and novices not merely to change their residences to suit their interests but also to live freely in one monastery and to study in another. It is this aspect of monastic institutions – acting not as closed corporations but as relatively open communities, a policy in line with the classical notion of a peripatetic or homeless monk, and with the present-day educational aspirations of the religious – that needs to be underlined as a distinct feature of the Thai system.

The biographies of some of the abbots of Wat Chakkravat, extending back to those who held office in the mid-nineteenth century, show that their educational careers and movement from villages in the provinces to the capital were similar to those of its present abbot. For example, the sixth abbot, Phra Pohthiwongsachan, who held office from 1895 to 1900, was born in a village in Ayutthaya province in 1822 and, after being ordained novice there, moved to Wat Chakkravat in 1835 to study *phra pariyatham*, under a learned monk living there. He was ordained monk at Wat Chakkravat in 1843, became a famous Pali scholar (having gained the sixth grade, *prayog* 6), was given high titles of the *phra rachakhana* rank, and succeeded to the abbotship in 1895. He died when he was 79 years of age.

Phrakhru S, Wat Thongnopakun, Thonburi, Age 29 (1971)

It would be a distortion to think that every novice or young monk making his way to monasteries in provincial towns and Bangkok-Thonburi thirsts for knowledge and education or, even if he thirsts, that he is able successfully to drink at the fountain of Pali knowledge. Phrakhru S, aged 29, is an example of an energetic but nonintellectual monk who has, however, found a responsible and active role to play in the day-to-day administration of a wat. His case is also interesting, for he first made his way to a wat in a provincial capital, from where again he made a move to Thonburi, helped by influential intermediaries who have their lines of communication between provincial monasteries and those in the capital.

Phrakhru S was born in the hamlet of Thisaab, in the district of Phibun, Ubon province. He too is a northeasterner.

He is one of eight children (the first child, a girl, died young and is excluded from this count), five of who are boys. S is the sixth child. His father is dead, but his mother is alive. The family are cultivating peasants. S's three older brothers are farmers (of rice or of orchards), and his two older sisters are also married to rice farmers, while his younger siblings are unmarried, a sister helping the mother and the youngest brother a student. The entire family resides in Ubon province.

In this large family S alone has become a professional religious who has

been novice and monk for some 16 years now (July 1971). He went to the village school and at 12 years of age passed grade 4. He then became a *dekwat* for a year and at the end of that year became ordained a *nen* (novice) at 13. S explained the reasons for his step as follows: When he finished the fourth grade, his mother wanted him to study further; he refused because he did not want to study and also because further studies would have entailed his going to a secondary school located 50 kilometers away in the district town. His mother then suggested that he become a novice, and having no other plans for his future he assented.

Phrakhru S's mother sponsored his ordination in the hamlet wat (Wat Chaumsi); he resided there for a year and then moved to Wat Maneewanaram, situated in the provincial capital of Ubon. A monk who was born in S's hamlet resided in this important wat, and he invited the boy to go there, a move advantageous to the boy because this wat ran a school for novices and lay children, preparing them for the secular exams for primary *prathom* grades 5 and 6 and the lower secondary grades of *matayom* 1–3. S lived in the same *khuti* as the older monk; he served him and kept the living quarters tidy; their relationship was that of *achan* (teacher) and *luksit* (pupil). His new urban wat was much larger than his village wat; it contained some 25 monks and 15 novices as against some 7–8 monks and 6 novices in his village wat. S's studies proceeded smoothly – he successfully passed the secondary school grade *matayom* 3 and also the second religious exam (*naktham tho*). He also began to study Pali, for his wat boasted some 6 *phra maha* monks (i.e., monks who had passed Pali exams from *prayog* 3 upward). After five years of residence as novice at Wat Manee, S was ordained monk and stayed on for another four years. His ordination as monk was sponsored not by his family but by the abbot of his wat, who was also the provincial ecclesiastical head (*chaokhana changwat*). (We thus come across our first instance of a fairly common feature: Titled monks, abbots, and other prestigious monks, who have access to financial rewards and gifts, themselves sponsor the ordinations, and bear the associated expenses, of boys or young men whose families cannot afford to do so. Similarly, unrelated affluent urban patrons may sponsor ordinations in lieu of the kin of the ordinands, who are usually both too poor and live too far away.)

Phrakhru S then decided to move to Bangkok-Thonburi, because he said he was bored with life in Ubon but, more importantly, because he was not making any headway with his Pali studies. He thought that a famous educational monastery in the capital might enable him to make a breakthrough. The move to Wat Thongnopakun in Thonburi was managed with the speed and panache of modern life; the abbot cum provincial head of Ubon made a telephone call to the abbot of Wat Thong – they had both been fellow monks at Wat Thong – and a place was promised then and there. (The abbot of Wat Thong himself had recently become the provincial ecclesiastical head of Thonburi province: We glimpse here an associational network among important monks holding ecclesiastical positions.)

Unfortunately, S, like many of us, has no linguistic flair. Though he is able and can pass secular exams, he cannot master the Pali language. This

is detrimental because Buddhist monks and the authorities regard the acquisition of Pali as a requisite of being learned. At Wat Thong, S has studied Pali for four years and goes to school regularly during Lent (*phansa*), but he still fails his exams.

But this setback has not prevented his other talents from being recognized inside his wat. He has an important practical administrative role to play in wat affairs – he looks after the school where he has his room, he is a member of the wat's building and maintenance committee, he helps with the organization of the wat ceremonials and the staging of mortuary rites in the wat (an important revenue-accruing activity in that the mourners pay rent for the use of the hall [*sala*] and the crematorium, etc.). S has thus found his "bureaucratic" niche, and his services have been rewarded by the abbot's conferring on him the title of *phrakhru*.* In due course S can hope to be rewarded with a more official title, though he will probably not ever become one of the high-ranking ecclesiastical monks or the abbot of an urban monastery. This is because he will not be considered a *phra pariyat* (a monk who has attained an acceptable level of learning); nor is he a monk who is interested in the practice of meditation and will one day become famous as a *phra pathibat* (monk who "practices"). He is suited to be a middle-range administrator, one of the organizational pillars of his wat, a head of a residential grouping (*chaokhana*) and perhaps, ultimately, even a deputy abbot.

Do these case studies suggest some inferences to us? We might surmise that the majority of monks in Bangkok and Thonburi are between 20 and 30 and are there primarily to pursue their educational objectives. We may also surmise that although a large number leave monkhood at the end of their educational training, yet a large number also remain as regular monks for much longer periods, often till they die.

We next note that the likely sequence is for a young boy to serve as a *dekwat*, then to become a novice, and, if he is reasonably able, to spend some years as a novice-student before becoming ordained a monk. In traveling along this biographical route, which is also a spatial one from village to city, the novice or young monk depends on the patronage and sponsorship of more senior monks to find him a place in a more desirable monastery.

There are some expressions that frequently recur when conversing about a monk's or novice's career, expressions that refer to a special asymmetrical relationship between a novice or young monk and a more senior monk. One common expression is *achan* and *luksit* (i.e., teacher and pupil), terms used by the persons in this relationship; another is *luang phi* (literally great [honorific] elder brother), which is used as a term of address and a reference by a novice (or a young monk) with respect to a more senior monk under whose charge he is or with whom he has a special relation.

* A monk with the ecclesiastical title of *phra rachakhana* of a certain grade (as the abbot is) is given the privilege of choosing five assistants on whom he can confer the title *phrakhru* of the lowest rank, which carries no state stipend.

In the villages especially when a young boy is ordained a novice, he is placed under the tutelage of an older monk who is supposed to act as his mentor. This older monk is a *luang phi* to the junior person, and the actual teaching activities can range from teaching dhamma or Pali, for ecclesiastical examinations, to instruction about the correct observance of the discipline (*vinai*). Similarly the *achan-luksit* terms are used broadly to cover a wide spectrum of teacher-pupil relationships. A senior monk versed in Pali and Buddhist doctrine, or versed in astrology, medicine, or beneficial ritual, may actually instruct a junior monk for some years. This is the relationship in its classical form. But monks may also use these terms more loosely to denote the relationship of dependence or obligation on the part of a client novice or monk to a more senior and often a titled monk who may be the head of the residential group (*khana*), the abbot of his wat, the monk who actually ordained him (*upachaya*), who often also is, but not always, his subsequent abbot.

We may also take note at this point of the expression *luang phau* (honorific + father), which monks and novices usually use for their elderly abbot, who is formally invested with the task of administering the wat and looking after its residents. Many old and famous monks – famed for learning, mystical power, and sagacity – are also addressed or referred to as *luang phau* so and so. Junior monks and novices may use expressions such as *luang na* (*na* = *moyobr*) with respect to senior monks if they are in an appropriate kinship relationship.

It seems plausible to suggest a transformation in the *luang phi* or *achan-luksit* relationship when one moves from small village wat to large urban monasteries. In villages, where often the wat have no elaborate schools, particular senior monks are important to young novices as their individual mentors. But as these novices move subsequently to larger monasteries with regular monastic schools, the *luang phi* or *achan* is not so much one from whom one learns – for learning is done at school and is dispensed by teacher-monks who teach classes, not individuals – but one who is a patron. Such a patron, especially if he is the head of the residential group (*khana*), gives to the novices in his care material gifts, money to buy books and other educational materials and to spend on personal needs and, especially in urban areas, to buy food from shops when the daily begging round has not produced enough food. In the large urban monasteries of Bangkok and Thonburi the relationship to one's actual teacher (*achan*) in a large monastic school may be relatively distant or impersonal when compared to that with the leader of the *khana;* this is all the more so when a monk or novice may live in one wat and get his education elsewhere, in another wat or at the university.

The individual biographies gives us informative details concerning the kinds of persons who a young novice or monk may rely upon in order to enable him to move from an inferior to a superior monastery. One kind of linkman, or sponsor, who apears again and again in many individual

biographies is a monk who is a kinsman (*yaad*) or a monk who was born in the same village or commune. The term "kinsman" broadly describes someone both closely and distantly related. The claims of kinship thus defined are not necessarily stronger than those of locality, for residence in the same locality by itself is also a ground for making claims on another person. Thus a fellow villager or kinsman who is in a better-endowed wat, especially in Bangkok or Thonburi, frequently acts as the link who finds the aspiring young man a place in the wat. This friend or kinsman will introduce the novice to his *khana* leader, in whom lies the power to accept or reject. Once the *khana* leader has agreed to give him a place, the novice's chief problem as regards moving to the capital is solved. The biography of Wichian showed how a kinsman cum fellow villager helped him to find a place in Thonburi.

Equally efficacious sponsors sought by promising novices or young monks are influential monks in the provinces. They are abbots or *upachaya* (ordainers) or titled district or provincial ecclesiastical heads (who are often their abbot and ordainers as well) – who have links with abbots and titled monks in the capital's monasteries. Very often these influential monks in the provinces have themselves spent part of their early careers in a Bangkok or Thonburi wat and have returned to their home provinces, being lured there by an abbotship or an ecclesiastical office. In one biography we saw how Phra S secured a place in a Thonburi wat through the good offices of his abbot, who was also the ecclesiastical provincial head.

Of course these two types of intermediaries, sponsors, or "brokers" are not mutually exclusive. Many novices or monks have been fortunate enough to find both kinds of intermediaries: the kinsman or fellow-villager monk who has preceded the *luksit* to the capital and finds him a place in the same monastery and the influential office-holding monk who acts as a patron and is able to exploit his widespread network of links with similar titled monks in the big city. Phra S had both kinds of sponsors in his movement from his village in the northeast, first to the provincial capital of Ubon and from there to Thonburi.

We are able to give this gloss on sponsorship some kind of quantitative support. Our information on the persons who sponsored the first and second residential shifts of Mahachula University students when they were novices and monks is tabulated in Tables 15.1 and 15.2.

We note that the sponsors of novices fall into two main categories: The first category is what a monk would call his *achan*, namely, his previous abbot, a titled monk who holds an ecclesiastical office and, less importantly, his *upacha* (if he is not already one of the two previously named). The second category is that composed of a kinsman-monk or a monk who came from the same locality of birth and who is already residing in the monastery to which ego goes. Both categories are important, though the *achan*-type sponsor is more important (37% versus 28%).

We may in passing take note of a third type, coded as "other sponsor,"

Table 15.1. *Persons who helped Mahachula students to change wat of residence when they were novices (sample = 321)*

Persons who helped make change of residence	Student-novices making: First change Number	First change Percent	Second change Number	Second change Percent	Total Number	Total Percent
Previous abbot	65	20.25	21	6.54	86	13.39
Titled monk/ecclesiastical office-holder (*phra phu yai*)	39	12.15	32	9.97	71	11.05
Upacha (ordainer)	18	5.61	4	1.25	22	3.42
Kinsman-monk	48	14.95	30	9.35	78	12.14
Monk from same hamlet/ commune of birth	37	11.53	32	9.97	69	10.74
Other sponsor	28	8.72	33	10.28	61	9.50
Self alone	15	4.67	15	4.67	30	4.67
No change of residence	19	5.92	105	32.71	124	19.31
Not ordained as novice	18	5.61	18	5.61	36	5.60
n.a.	34	10.59	31	9.66	65	10.12
Total	321	100	321	100	642	100

who is usually some other monk of ego's acquaintance whom he had met while residing in a wat; he may even be the friend of a friend, and so on, or some such useful link in a personal network.

In Table 15.2, relating to residential changes made later when the respondents became monks, we see changes in two directions, which are in accord with the fact that the monk is now some distance and wat away from his locality of origin and therefore less dependent on ties of kinship and locality and more dependent on titled sponsors and new friends. Thus titled monks and office-holders and abbots figure as important sponsors, while kinsmen and persons from the same natal locality decline in importance, with new friends and acquaintances becoming slightly more important.

Let us now broach, with the aid of the biographies, the question of how many moves or shifts from one monastery to another that a novice who becomes a monk is likely to make during his religious career. As the biography of Wichian shows, a young novice can sometimes make the leap from his village wat to a Bangkok-Thonburi wat without having to go through intermediary stages. But the frequency of such one-move careers is small judged quantitatively. My collection of detailed biographies of monks and novices residing in Bangkok-Thonburi shows that not only did the vast majority come to Bangkok from the provinces but also that the modal career involves at least two to three shifts, the last move being to the capital. To put it differently, a novice or regular monk who has made his way to the capital is likely to have resided in two or three other wat before

Table 15.2. *Persons who helped Mahachula students to change wat when they were monks* ($N = 324$)

Persons who helped make change of residence	Student-monks making: First change Number	First change Percent	Second change Number	Second change Percent	Total Number	Total Percent
Previous abbot	16	4.94	5	1.54	21	3.24
Titled monk/office-holder (*phra phu yai*)	20	6.17	12	3.70	32	4.96
Upacha (ordainer)	8	2.47	2	0.62	10	1.54
Kinsman-monk	10	3.09	5	1.54	15	2.31
Monk from same locality of birth	9	2.78	3	0.93	12	1.85
Other sponsor	18	5.56	13	4.9	31	4.81
Self alone	6	1.85	7	2.16	13	2.00
No change of residence	191	58.95	248	76.5	439	67.74
Not yet ordained monk	22	6.48	22	6.79	44	6.79
n.a.	24	7.72	7	2.16	31	4.81
Total	324	100	324	100	648	100

coming to his terminal wat; he thus will have resided altogether in three or four wat. Once they have reached a monastery in Bangkok or Thonburi, a minority of monks may make still other moves both within the city or a last move back to the provinces; but the majority of novices and regular monks stay put in the same wat in the capital until they terminate their careers through disrobing or death.

Table 15.3, which relates to the same sample of 324 Mahachula University students (who are, let me emphasize, young, 85% of them being under 30 years, and are far from having concluded their careers), confirms our sketch of the career path: About 48 percent of the monks had resided in three wat as novices and monks and another 33 percent in four wat or more. It also indicates that the largest number of moves are made while being a novice.

We can now abstract from the foregoing discussion a formal picture of the total network of monasteries throughout the country insofar as they represent an interconnected system along whose multiple paths novices and young monks can and do travel from village to the capital. Figure 15.1 is an attempt to diagram the pathways *taking individual wat or monasteries* as our units. From a multitude of village wat young novices may first make their way to larger wat in the same district (*amphur*) that have better educational facilities for preparing them for *naktham* and *parian* examinations; from there the educationally ambitious novices (or monks) may find their way to the provincial capitals for the same reason and, ultimately, to the monastic centers of Bangkok or Thonburi. Once arrived there, the

Table 15.3. *Number and percent of wat in which Mahachula University students resided*

Number of wat in which resided	Students residing: As novices		As monks		As both novices and monks	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	19	5.92	192	59.26	3	0.93
2	87	27.10	57	17.59	49	15.12
3	194	60.44	53	16.36	155	47.84
4	2	–	–	–	89	27.47
5	–	–	–	–	11	3.40
6	–	–	–	–	10	2.16
Never a novice	17	5.30	22	6.79	–	–
n.a.	2	0.62	–	–	7	2.16
Total	321*	100.00	324	100.00	324	100.00

* There is a slight discrepancy of 3 in the totals.

highest ambition of the scholar-novice or monk today is to study at one of the two monks' universities – Mahachulalongkorn or Mahamakut.

We should note that this network from village to the capital whose units are monasteries is a potential or latent system, for there is *no formally constituted hierarchy* that says that village wat such and such should send their bright young novices to such and such district centers and thus upward to the capital in a regularized relationship among monasteries of different levels. The links among monasteries in the picture are potential ones that can be activated; but the activation is done by individual monks and novices who act as sponsors and intermediaries. But although there are no conventional or legalized links between the different levels of wat as corporate units, yet varying frequencies of personal links among individual monks residing in different monasteries may through time establish certain preferences and precedents, resulting in certain densities of regional links. Let me explain: If a monk from locality X in province Y finds a place in a Bangkok wat, he in turn may act as an intermediary for other boys of his locality, and in time an overlay of such recruitment patterns may result in higher-level wat recruiting mainly from certain constituencies. Or again, a monk who once studied in a Bangkok-Thonburi wat and returned to the provinces to become an abbot or ecclesiastical office-holder there will try to find places for ambitious young novices and monks in his previous wat; he will tend to have continuing dependent relationships with the abbot and his seniors at the parent wat.

In Figure 15.1 it is clear that the lower reaches of the network are more clearly geographically bounded than the upper reaches. Thus at the village

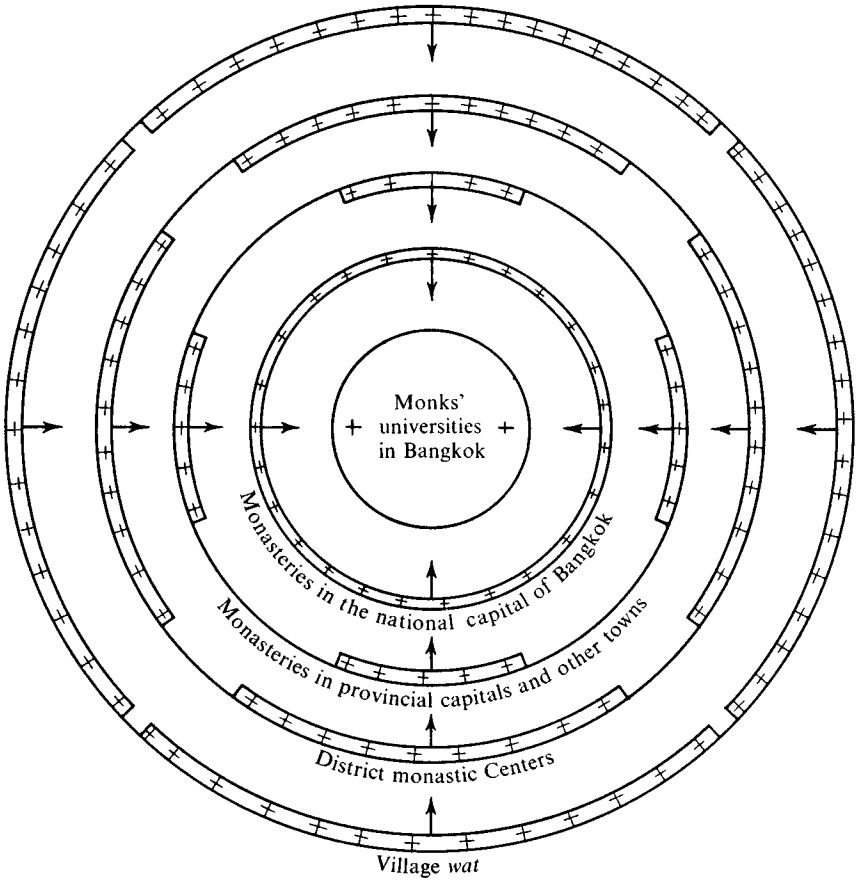


Figure 15.1. The total monastic network.

level it is very likely that a novice would move from a small wat to a larger one within the same district (sometimes even the same commune); it is also likely that if he were to move again, the youth will move to an urban monastery in the capital city of his province (or in other towns within the same province).

The Role of Provincial Capitals in Monastic Education

Let us pause here and examine as far as possible the constitution and role of monasteries in provincial capitals. We have a study in hand with which we can profitably begin, namely, Jane Bunnag's study of monastic organization in the town of Ayutthaya conducted in 1966–1967 (Bunnag 1973).

The town of Ayutthaya is situated some 55 miles north of Bangkok and was the previous capital of the kingdom of Siam from 1350 until 1767. But

since the extinction of the old capital and its supersession by Bangkok, the modern town of Ayutthaya has remained stagnant, mainly because it is too near the new capital to sustain any real independence (p. 3). It has a narrow industrial sector, and although situated in the center of the richest rice-growing area in the country, it is largely bypassed by the rice trade in favor of Bangkok.

Ayutthaya derives its position today mainly from its being the capital of the province of the same name, which makes it a center of bureaucratic and educational activity. "There are today more than sixty schools and other teaching establishments in the town, and a substantial proportion of the 30,000 people resident in the municipal area are employed in the state-run hospitals and banks, or in any one of the numerous government offices" (p. 6).

Within the district of Ayutthaya where the town is located there are some 72 Buddhist monasteries or wat. "The most important ecclesiastical offices are attached to the large urban foundations and the ecclesiastical heads of both the province and the district of Ayutthaya are resident in the town. There are also in this provincial capital special schools for the instruction of the ordained which attract monks from the outlying rural villages, as well as from further afield, outside the region" (p. 7). For the *bhikkhus* of Ayutthaya as elsewhere in the country, dhamma study meant primarily working for the annual ecclesiastical examinations (both *naktham* and Pali *parian*).

Both the *naktham* and *parian* courses are taught in ecclesiastical schools, which are to be found at some of the larger urban wat. In Ayutthaya municipal area there are three such institutions located at Wat Suwandaram, Wat Phanan Choeng, and Wat Senasanaram (the only Thammayut sect monastery in the town). "The bhikkhus who instructed the monks and the novices studying at the various schools, were either residents of local monasteries, or alternatively had been specially sent from one of the Buddhist universities in the capital. These three monastery schools made Ayutthaya into something of an ecclesiastical educational centre, attracting monks from other provinces of Thailand where facilities were less developed, though the most serious students usually made their way to Bangkok" (p. 43).

It may be noted that as in Bangkok and many provincial towns, so in Ayutthaya's monasteries, little formal instruction is given by senior to junior monks, as was traditionally the case, because *bhikkhus* pursuing courses of ecclesiastical study attend the monastery schools at Wat Suwan and Wat Phanan Choeng (p. 99).

But all monasteries are not the same in their orientation to learning and in their internal composition. The monasteries in the municipal area varied in size from between 5 to 29 permanent monks; there were also varying numbers of novices, monastery boys (*dekwat*), and, in a few cases, nuns (*mae chi*).

The two main teaching monasteries – Wat Suwan and Wat Phanan

Choeng – have a higher proportion of novices, as these boys are attracted by the study facilities offered. Furthermore, these larger and more prosperous establishments, where food and accommodation are readily available, have a greater appeal for *dekwat*, whether they live there on a permanent or part-time basis (p. 87).

The teaching monasteries have noticeably few retired monks as compared with the other wat. In the two wat named earlier, approximately one-half the total number of *bhikkhus* are in their twenties or early thirties, and the remaining older residents are permanent monks of long standing.

Indeed the abbots of these wats have been known to refuse admission to men who wished to spend their declining years there, on the grounds that the living space available was needed for monks and novices, who intended to make use of the educational facilities provided. Several smaller monasteries had a similar policy . . . (p. 87).

On the other hand certain establishments are little more than hostels for old men, and are in consequence shunned by younger monks who, whether or not they have serious academic intentions, prefer to live in livelier communities (p. 87).

A variable sample of a maximum of 90 monks living in some 20 monasteries in the municipality of Ayutthaya provided some valuable (though not statistically comprehensive[1]) information on the background of the respondents. The survey was begun in December 1966, that is to say, more than two months after the close of the Lenten season and the exit of temporary monks. Thus only two informants in the sample stated that they had been ordained temporarily.

Taking note of the fact that over 68 percent of the *bhikkhus* in the sample had come from farming families, the majority from within the province but born outside the town itself, while the rest came from the lower ranks of urban society occupied by vendors, laborers, and low-level government employees,[2] let us give close attention to what Bunnag has to say about the important educational role of the towns monasteries for scholar-novices who later became monks:

Enquiry as to the previous educational status of the monks surveyed revealed the interesting fact that only fourteen of the ninety who completed their ques-

[1] It appears that about 187 questionnaires were distributed, but only 100 were returned, of which only a variable number had adequate information on different items.

[2] The number of monks who were of rural background and had lived in a rural area before ordination were 58 out of a total of 85 (68%): of these, 15 had come from farming settlements within the Ayutthaya district, 26 had lived in rural districts in other parts of the Ayutthaya province, and the remaining 17 had come from other provinces.

The number of monks who had lived in an urban area prior to ordination were 27 (32%); of these, only 4 came from Ayutthaya, the rest from a varied number of towns in the whole country (p. 192).

Some 52 monks (58%) out of 90 had been farmers by occupation (mostly helping parents), while another 27 had been in "working-class" occupations – vendor (13), laborer (5), and low-level government employee [janitor, guard, chauffeur] (5).

Perhaps equally significant is that father's occupation, *where known*, was overwhelmingly farming (48 cases), the others being vending (4) or laboring (1).

tionnaires had received any secondary education and that the majority of these had studied the advanced syllabus for only one or two years; of the 47% who reported having received formal primary education 72% had been ordained as novices on completing *Prathom* 4 which marks the limit of compulsory education provided freely by the State. A further 11% of the total sample had entered the *wat* as novices on a permanent basis some years after leaving primary school. In most cases such boys had spent the intervening period during their early teens in helping their families with the business of living, whether this involved giving a hand with the rice-farming or with some more urban activity. For all of these boys, whether they came from families in the town or in the country, their ordination enabled them to gain access to educational facilities otherwise unavailable to them, and nearly two-thirds of all the *bhikkhus* interviewed who had been novices (*nen*) for a number of years, had received Higher Ordination as a monk on reaching the age of twenty, whilst the remainder had followed the "way of the world" for varying periods of time before returning to the society of monks.[3] It should be remembered that ordination as a monk is not necessarily preceded by a period of service as a novice in the *wats* of Central Thailand, and indeed over 50% of my informants had never been novices on either a permanent or temporary basis. Any Thai male is eligible to become a *bhikkhu* on reaching the age of twenty, and indeed 46% of the monks interviewed had received Higher Ordination at this stage in their lives, whilst a further 11% had entered the *wat* for the first time in their late twenties. As we mentioned earlier there is a second point in a man's life-cycle when he is likely to become ordained, namely when he is freed of his social responsibilities in later life, and 27% of the monks surveyed were ordained in later middle-age or beyond (pp. 46–47).

We have so far reported on the educational role of the monasteries in this provincial capital especially for certain recruits from the farming sector. Let us now try to fit this provincial town into the national network and hierarchy of urban places and inquire in what ways in particular this provincial town's monastic structure differs from that of the national capital. While Ayutthaya mediates between the rural area and the metropolis, Bangkok-Thonburi, the latter is the terminus for all the provincial routes. It will, therefore, have proportionally more educated and younger monks than Ayutthaya. Academic qualifications are relatively rare in Ayutthaya as compared with the capital: Bunnag reports that only two monks in the town had passed Pali grade 6, the midpoint in *parian* studies. The annual report of the department of Religious Affairs for 1969 gives a figure of only 11 monks as having achieved grades 6–9 in the entire region 2 (of which the province of Ayutthaya is the major unit). It can be said of Ayutthaya, more than for the capital, that although academic achievement provides a channel of mobility, yet the majority of monks "evince no eagerness to shine in the *Sangha*, nor to use their ecclesiastical training to advantage in the lay world" (p. 47).

[3] The five monks who gave their preordination occupations as civil servants had variously been employed as janitor at the town hall (1), museum guard (1), postman (1), and government chauffeurs (2). Officials of this rank (grade 4) are barely differentiated in terms of income and life style from urban service workers.

This situation partly results from Ayutthaya's playing the role of a feeder town and losing its most able scholars to the capital, so that many of those left behind are the nonparticipants who provide a picture that contrasts with that provided by the aspiring novices: As many as 50 percent of Bunnag's sample had never been ordained novice and are by and large excluded from the typical scholar-monk's life history that we have outlined. Furthermore, we learn that a fair number (25 out of 90) had been ordained in middle age and that many of them had been married and had raised families;[4] thus they cannot have ordained to advance their education. While Bangkok has its share of the retired aged, Ayutthaya's "hostels for old men" are a weightier component of the monastic system.

It is to be expected that the physical mobility of the monks of Ayutthaya should be less than that of the capital's monks: In Bunnag's sample 78 percent of monks had lived in two or more monasteries,[5] a frequency that appears to be less than that for the capital's monks.[6]

Finally, it seems to be the case that the variation among monasteries in Ayutthaya in the matter of educational concentration is greater than in Bangkok-Thonburi; Ayutthaya's teaching monasteries, however, appear to approach more closely the standards of many Bangkok monasteries that set the norm.

With one provincial capital covered in detail, let me now briefly describe the composition of three monasteries in three other provincial capitals in order to reiterate and confirm certain major points we have made concerning the educational role of the provincial capitals within a national framework converging on Bangkok. We have briefly mentioned our three cases in Chapter 13. Each of them is the largest monastery in its respective province (and therefore also in the provincial capital) and acts as a magnet for the youth of the province who become ordained.

Wat Majjimawas was founded in 1893, at the time the city of Udorn (in Udorn province) was officially founded and recognized as the provincial capital; in fact its location was the site of an older wat that had gone into decline. The wat was upgraded to a royal wat in 1963 in recognition of its preeminent position in the province. The former abbot of the wat was also the ecclesiastical governor of the province (*chaokhana changwat*); the present abbot is the acting governor, while the deputy abbot is the deputy governor (*raung chaokhana changwat*) of the province.

When I visited the wat at the end of Lent in 1971, it had about 60 monks and 155 novices; 15 young men had been newly ordained (*phra*

[4] Twenty-five monks in Bunnag's sample had been married at some time, and 22 of them had children; 19 had wives still living.

[5] Of the remaining 19 of a total of 90, 4 were newly ordained, 5 had in their old age retired to the nearest monastery, and 4 more had never moved, having been ordained in the nearest wat.

[6] It should be noted, however, that my entire sample for Bangkok reported in Tables 15.1 and 15.2 is drawn from student-monks and novices; in Bunnag's sample also probably the young educated monks are overrepresented.

buad mai), and, already, those of them who were government officials had resumed their lay status, while the rest were awaiting the *kathin* ceremony to be staged before disrobing.

It was explained to me that it was usual for this wat as well as for most other northeastern wat to have novices as their largest category of members, who are there for educational reasons. They come from poor families in the villages.

Wat Majjimawas had a flourishing school for religious studies (*rongrian pariyattitham*) as can be gauged by the fact that it had 18 monks who had the *phra maha* title, which indicated that they were Pali scholars of varying excellence. For instance, the deputy abbot had secured *prayog* 8 and was therefore made *chaokhun* (*phra rachakhana*). Subsequently, he became engaged in administration, thereby removing himself from further studies. The school itself was manned by 12 teachers, 4 teaching *naktham* and 8 Pali. But the most interesting feature about the novice students was that there were only two novices still left in the wat who had passed the lowest Pali examination (*prayog* 3), the other successful novices having already found places in Bangkok or Thonburi monasteries, from where they could conduct higher studies. Most of the young novices at Wat Majjimawas were thus being trained in *naktham* and low-level Pali studies as a preliminary to their going to the capital city when they passed the lower examinations.

A slightly different picture is presented by Wat Podharam, once again the largest wat in the city of Nakohn Sawan, situated north of Bangkok in the central region. This wat is wealthy because it stands on a large piece of land in the heart of the city, which, as urbanization accelerates in Thailand, it has put to remunerative use by building shops and business premises on its perimeter and leasing them to lay businessmen. I was told that the wat received a rent of 40,000 baht ($2,000) per month from these buildings alone. What is of importance to us is not simply the fact of this income but the uses to which it was being put. Much of the accumulated income has been spent on building a five-story wing as a residence for monks and novices. After Lent in November 1971, there were 41 monks and 104 novices residing there. An active school that was run by the wat catered not merely to its resident scholar-novices and monks but also to whoever else from other monasteries wanted to study there. Wat Podharam boasted 19 monks who had the scholar *phra maha* titles and 24 novices who had also passed one of the preliminary Pali exams. Some of these scholars were also learning English from a resident Burmese monk. It is clear that a wat as important and prosperous as this one will keep growing larger and invest its new-found commercial wealth in newer and larger buildings. Its capacity to sponsor and further the education of poor rural boys is not by any means diminished in the present context.

Now let us go farther north to Chiangmai province and view its largest wat, Wat Phra Singh, which is a royal wat, and whose abbot was, until

his recent retirement, a famous ecclesiastical governor of the province. In terms of its membership Wat Phra Singh is like any other provincial center: It had at the end of Lent in 1971 44 monks and 115 novices and 72 *dekwat* (temple boys). These are said to come from all parts of the province. It had an orthodox *pariyattitham* school, run by 12 monk-teachers and 1 layman; the wat had 6 *phra maha*, not a total to be proud of for a wat of its size.

The novel feature of Wat Phra Singh is that in addition to its orthodox religious school (which all novices and young monks attended) it also ran a school imparting secular education. One section of the school was exclusively for novices and monks, and the other part exclusively for lay students. This school devoted itself solely to the preparation of students for state examinations up to the *maw saw* 3 (secondary) level.

This kind of dual school – for the religious as well as lay boys – supported by government finance is an experiment that tries to cater to new needs and urges within the sangha itself – that its personnel be subject not only to the traditional study of Pali, dhamma, and *abhidhamma* (the scope of the *pariyattitham* schools) but also to the new secular knowledge imparted in state schools. (As we shall see later, this experiment anticipates subsequent legislation on the reform of ecclesiastical education.) The north apparently had two other similar schools, one located in Lamphun and the third in Lampang (both of which are important northern centers).

These brief sketches indicate the kind of educational services provincial monastic centers located at some distance from the national capital are attempting to provide mainly for novice-students whom they mostly recruit from within the confines of the province. These geographical boundaries cannot operate when monks and novices make their final move to Bangkok-Thonburi, for the national capital should in theory receive its members from all over the country. But the functioning of the "old-boy" network, which I have alluded to earlier, creates two kinds of membership patterns in the Bangkok-Thonburi wat, patterns that deviate from what might be expected from a completely open and random recruitment system.

1. There are certain monasteries that are well known for having most of their membership recruited from certain major regions (e.g., northeast, north, south, etc.).

2. Many of the larger urban monasteries are, however, divided into residential (*khana*) clusters and groupings, usually composed of monks, novices (and *dekwat*) from the same province recruited through the old-boy network. But each monastery as a whole is likely to have members who have come from a large number of provinces and from different regions.

3. However, since the northeastern region produces a large number of novices and regular monks in the country and also has the largest regional representation in the monasteries of Bangkok and Thonburi, the northeasterners will constitute the largest regional contingent though not the majority in the monasteries of type 2.

Let me give examples of these trends. The following monasteries in the capital are well known for having predominantly monks from the following regions (the list is not exhaustive):

Northeastern predominance:	Wat Boromnivas (Thammayut *nikai*)
	Wat Prathumvanaram (Thammayut *nikai*)
	Wat Noronas (Thammayut *nikai*)
	Wat Srimahathad (Thammayut *nikai*)
Northern predominance:	Wat Benchamabopit (Mahanikai)
Southern predominance:	Wat Rajathiwas (Thammayut *nikai*)

As is to be expected, the northeasterners dominate more single wat than others; but we also note that the majority of these wat belong to the Thammayut chapter. This is a product of certain specific features of the Thammayut chapter as compared with the Mahanikai. The former is more tightly organized, and, historically, true to the reforming zeal as a minority movement within the sangha, it sent out disciples from Bangkok to outlying areas, especially the northeast, to found wat. It is said that the Thammayut sect became well established in the northeast because Mongkut sent two of his well-known disciples there. Anyway, the recruitment patterns of the Thammayut monasteries in Bangkok show a tighter regional concentration than the Mahanikai wat, which show a much more dispersed pattern of recruitment.

There is another interesting feature associated with these regional wat in Bangkok and Thonburi. They tend to be patronized and materially supported to a large extent by lay urbanites who have come to the capital from the same regions and provinces as the monks themselves. Northeastern laymen tend to go to wat where northeastern monks are concentrated: The same Lao dialect can be shared in conversation, regional delicacies are prepared by the pious womenfolk for their favorite monks, and the pleasures of cultural distinctiveness thus enjoyed. Moreover, when an astrologer's advice must be sought about a marriage, a domestic quarrel must be settled, or a merit-making ceremony must be performed at home, what monks are more appropriate than those from one's own natal region or locality?

Perhaps the most colorful expression of regional culture and interests in the capital is the staging of rituals that are regionally distinctive and that both laymen and monks from the same region stage for their mutual enjoyment and religious benefit. For instance, the *tan kuay salak* ceremony is distinctive of northern Thailand. At this ceremony lay devotees bring packages of gifts that are assigned numbers, and the monks draw lots for them. Such a ceremony was staged on September 26, 1971, at Wat Benchamabopit (popularly called the Marble Temple), a famous monastery founded by King Chulalongkorn and manned predominantly by monks from the north.

The Bangkok Post reported the event with the large caption "Northerners dance, sing and pray." A picture of a joyous procession with floats, orchestras, placards, and pretty northern girls had this gloss:

The procession and dancing troupe from Chiang Rai Province, followed by the Lampang revellers and other Northerners, march to the temple during the "Tan Kuay Salak Fair" yesterday morning. The upcountry natives gave offerings to the monks to gain merit which is [*sic*] one of the many religious celebrations held yearly by the Northerners in the Bangkok region.

Here are some excerpts from the main news item itself:

Northerners in Bangkok, Thonburi and nearby provinces gathered yesterday morning to celebrate . . . "Tan Kuay Salak Fair" at the Marble Temple.

"Tan Kuay Salak" means to give the Buddhist monks basketsful of essentials. Donors do not choose any favourite monk on whom to bestow their gifts, to show their pure faith in the religion.

A procession of dancers and floats from each northern province marched from the Government House to the Marble Temple to give luncheon for 400 monks, hear a sermon and present the offerings.

After the ceremony, troupes from each province performed their native dances and music . . . (September 27, 1971).

The more usual pattern, as I have said before, is for most Bangkok-Thonburi wat to have clusters of monks and novices from several regions and provinces, with the largest contingent usually coming from the northeast. Tables 15.4 and 15.5 give the regions (and provinces) of birth of monks and novices who resided in two wat: Wat Thongnopakun in Thonburi and Wat Chakkravat in Bangkok. The distributions express a general feature.

The Wat Thongnopakun monks and novices have been recruited primarily from the northeastern regions and from a wide spread of central regions. The north and the south are conspicuously underrepresented. The most numerous of the northeasterners are from Ubon and Nakhonrachasima provinces. The reason why the province of Chachoengsao in the Central Plain has contributed seven monks and three novices to the wat is because the abbot himself was born in Chachoengsao and has both attracted and recruited candidates from that area. The heavy representation from the northeast is said to be traditional. It may be noted that the immediate locality in which the wat is located – region 1 – has contributed only about one-eighth of the monks and one-thirteenth of the novices during the period considered.

Now let us scrutinize the regions of birth of the monks and novices of Wat Chakkravat, which is a large monastery and had 88 monks and 63 novices as its residents after *phansa* in 1971. Once again we see the preponderance of northeasterners, who constitute 58 percent of the monks and 73 percent of the novices, the largest contingents again coming from the provinces of Ubon and Nakhonrachasima. The next largest representation is from the Central Plain (35% of the monks and 19% of the novices); Bangkok and its neighborhood contribute little of this, while the provinces

Table 15.4. *Regions of birth of monks and novices in Wat Thongnopakun, Thonburi*

Region of Birth	Monks who resided during period 1966–1969 (sample = 46)	Novices who resided during period 1962–1968 (sample = 52)
Central (Region 1)		
Thonburi province	4	2
Nonburi, Prathumthani Samutprakan provinces	4	2
Other Regions		
Sukhothai province	6	5
Chachoengsao province	7	3
Rayong province	4	4
Other provinces	3	5
Total	28	21
Northeast (Regions 8, 9, 10, 11)		
Ubonrachathani province	6	12
Nakhonrachasima province	2	7
Other provinces	6	9
Total	14	28
North	1	1
Total	1	1
South	3	2
Total	3	2
Grand Total:	46	52

of Ayutthaya and Saraburi, to the immediate north of Bangkok, contribute significantly. Once again the north and the south have sent insignificant numbers.

The Structure of Khana *Residential Groupings*

The word *khana* has a range of meanings. It may in certain contexts be used for the entire sangha itself as a body. It may be used to label the formal divisions of the sangha administration: Thus the northern, southern, and central divisions of the Mahanikai sect, and the entirety of the Thammayut sect, which was formally given the status of a division of the same kind in 1902, can each be referred to as *khana;* so can the provincial and district and other territorial divisions of the sangha whose heads bear the title *chaokhana* (head of *khana*), for example, *chaokhana changwat, chaokhana amphur,* and so on. At a lower level of differentiation, *khana* is used for the residential units into which the monks and novices of a wat may

Table 15.5. *Regions of birth of regular monks and novices residing in Wat Chakkravat, Bangkok, 1971* (Navaga excluded)

Region of birth	Monks residing in 1971 (88)	Novices residing in 1971 (63)
Central		
Region 1		
Pranakhon (Bangkok)	5	2
Samutprakan	1	–
Region 2		
Ayutthaya	8	–
Saraburi	6	8
Angthong	2	–
Other Regions	9	2
Total	31 (35%)	12 (19%)
Northeast		
Region 10		
Ubonrachathani	16	7
Sisaket	5	4
Region 11		
Nakhonrachasima	13	13
Buriram	4	6
Chaiyaphum	2	6
Other Regions	9	11
Total	51 (58%)	47 (73%)
North		
Region 7		
Chiangmai	1	1
Total	1	1
South		
Region 18		
Songkhla	3	2
Total	3	2
Other Countries		
Cambodia	1	1
Laos	1	–
Total	2	1
Grand Total*:	88	63

* The official wat registers give the number of regular monks as 92 and novices as 68.

be divided, each such unit being in the charge of a senior monk called *chaokhana* again. Finally, *khana* may also be used to describe a monk's informal following or some kind of factional grouping. In this section I use the word *khana* to refer to the residential divisions or units within a wat, which may, or part of which may, become *khana* in the sense last enumerated.

(I propose to discuss in detail in another work the organization and composition of these residential groups, or *khana*, in a few Bangkok-Thonburi wat – together with other issues such as the latters' economic basis, administrative organization, ritual cycle, and the transactions they and their religious personnel have with various categories of the urban population.)

Here let me very briefly refer to certain aspects of intra-*khana* relationships and illustrate them with a few examples. A *khana* tends to have monks, novices and temple boys (*sidwat* or *dekwat*) from a particular locality as its main core, and this geographical locality tends to correspond to the locality from which the leader of the residential group (*chaokhana*) himself comes. For it is he who acts as the chief patron and recruiter and assigner of places (with the abbot's consent) in his *khana* to supplicant monks, novices, and *dekwat* from the provinces. The larger the size of the *khana*, the greater the likelihood of its internal division into smaller groupings with their special regional affiliations.

There is a variation in the role of *khana* in the organization of a wat, a variation that is usually related to the size of the wat and the strength of leadership provided by the abbot. In a small wat led by an energetic abbot who wants to run a tight ship, there may be no *khana* at all (as, for example, in the Thammayut wat of Wat Thatthong).[7] But usually there are *khana* divisions, and in a small wat, like Wat Thongnopakun in Thonburi, although there are 13 *khana*, the abbot personally oversees the affairs of some 4 of them and, generally, exerts strong control over the domestic arrangements of and recruitment of the wat, even though the *chaokhana* are given the right to choose new recruits.[8] But in bigger wat, such as Wat Chakkravat, where the *khana* are large, each being made up of many constituent *khuti*, and where there are many titled senior monks to act as *khana* heads, these heads could become important foci for the *khana* inmates. Indeed, a *khana* may have more then one senior monk of prestige, and subgroups may crystallize around them. Such tendencies find their most complex expression in a very large wat like Wat Mahathad (with a population of 250 monks, 83 novices, and 369 *sidwat* in the post-Lent period in late 1971), where *khana* are many, subdivided into smaller groupings, and where there are a number of famous monks who have their beholden followings, which have their special contours depending on whether the leader and sponsor (*hua na/phu yai*) is a Pali scholar, a meditation teacher, an astrologer, a physician, or a renowned performer of efficacious rituals.

Entrance requirements to *khana* and daily eating arrangements are not a matter for general prescription by the sangha, since they are not a part of

[7] Located in Phrakhanong, Bangkok.

[8] The abbot's consent is also necessary, but the special feature of Wat Thong is that there is an entrance test administered to prospective entrants by a committee of monks appointed by the abbot. A novice should be able to recite the *Chet Tamnan* and a monk the *Sibsong Tamnan*. These rules are not general, and are not a matter of *vinai* and are special to this wat.

the formal *vinai* code, and therefore each wat and indeed different khana in the same wat may impose varying rules and develop their own distinctive customs. In some *khana* the custom as imposed or continued by the *chaokhana* may be that the food collected in the morning be pooled and the *khana* inmates eat together, the monks in one circle, the novices in another, and the *sidwat* in a third. In other *khana* the eating arrangements may either be individualized or pertain to smaller clusters within the *khana*, as happens in larger wat such as Wat Chakkravat or Wat Mahathad. In *urban* wat located in residential neighborhoods, the collection of sufficient food (supplemented by food cooked by lay women and nuns in special kitchens) presents no problem and commensal arrangements are of no special significance. But especially in wat situated in commercial sectors of the city (populated predominantly by Chinese), the logistics of food could be a matter of concern, and sponsorship and patronage of senior monks over their juniors could find an expression in the commensal arrangements (as we shall see in our examples of Wat Chakkravat).

There are certain orthodox practices, however, that are generally observed by wat. While an ordained monk is not required to be formally attached to a more senior monk (requirements for the gaining of "freedom from *nissaya*," which we discussed in the medieval Sinhalese *Katikavata* [Chapter 9], do not apply any more), a *samanera* is expected to be attached to a monk, who is generally referred to as *luang phi* (honored elder brother). This monk bears no responsibility today, because of the existence of monastic schools, to teach the *samanera*, though he is otherwise expected to give moral direction and other kinds of assistance. Monks, novices, and *sidwat* as three separate categories must sleep in separate places (or rooms).

In the illustrations that follow, I shall concentrate on the pattern of sponsorship relationships that may prevail within the *khana* and the bonds that link their members in the capital's urban wat. They further elaborate the *achan-luksit* relationships already outlined for the monk or novice on his way from the village to the capital. They also bring to our closer attention, for the first time, the temple boys (*sidwat/dekwat*), who will be the subject of a special comment in the following section.

1. Let us begin with a single dyadic relationship.

> Samanera Wichien lives in *khana* 3 at Wat Thongnopakun. He was born in Rayong province (northeast), and at the age of seven became a *dekwat* in his village wat, because a monk asked his parents for his service. After he completed *praythom* 4, he was ordained a novice at Wat Naungkogmu when he was 12: There a senior monk, Phrakhru Niang, instructed him personally, there being no school, and after five years of novicehood he completed the *naktham* exams.
>
> At the conclusion of his *naktham*, there was a ceremony in his village which was attended by Phrakhrupalat Thiang, who invited the novice to come to Wat Thong in the capital. This *phrakhru* was born in the same village and was the novice's kinsman and bore the same surname as Wichien's mother's. The novice said he calls his sponsor *luang na*

(honorific + *mo yo br*). He came to Wat Thong three years ago, lives in the same *khana* and *khuti* as his sponsor, and is successfully pursuing his Pali studies.

The *phrakhru* does not personally educate him because Wichien goes to school; nor does Wichien accompany his sponsor on the morning food collection rounds, as this is not expected. But the *phrakhru* gives ego money, about 20–30 baht per month, from his own funds, as pocket money. The novice in turn daily cleans the *phrakhru*'s room and otherwise attends to his needs. The *phrakhru* is his mentor in the practice of the discipline.

The novice has ambitions to complete the highest Pali grade, get a B.A. degree from Mahachulalongkorn University, and become a teacher.

2. Let us now place this dyad in the web of relationships of the *khana* as a whole during the Lent of 1971. The *khana* in question is a small unit composed of two monks, three *navaga* (temporary), and one *sidwat*.

The head of the *khana* was Phramaha Saree, who was the *lekha* (secretary) to the abbot, who was then the provincial ecclesiastical head. He was an able Pali teacher and was the head of the wat's school. The *sidwat* was in his care; he was a relative from the head's own locality in Nakhonrachasima province. This *sidwat* was 18 years old, had completed his secondary schooling, was learning English at the language school run by A.U.A. (American University Alumni), and was seeking entrance to the university. He has so far resided in the *khana* for three years. His parents pay his school fees. The three newly ordained temporary monks were the sons of lay supporters of the wat who lived in the neighborhood and who had specifically chosen Phramaha Saree to be their sons' mentor during their brief period of service. During Lent their parents brought food regularly to feed the entire *khana* at lunch time.

The other monk in the same *khana* was Phrakhrupalat Thiang; the *samanera* is his relative and in his care. (We have described this relationship in paragraph 1.)

The two monks themselves are not kin or from the same locality of birth. They met in the wat, and Phramaha Saree, who was the Phrakhrupalat's Pali teacher at the school, invited him to come and join his *khana*.

Khana 3 had three separate *khuti* (dwellings): In one lived the head, in another lived Phrakhrupalat and his *samanera* in two separate rooms; in the third *khuti* lived the three *navaga* in three separate rooms. The *dekwat* slept in a small room adjoining the bathroom.

3. Next, in Wat Thong again, there is a more numerous *khana*, composed this time of 2 monks, 2 novices, and 10 *sidwat*:

Phramaha Phak, aged 44, is an assistant to his abbot (*phuchuay chaowat*), has passed Pali grade 8, and is the *chaokhana* of *khana* 4.

He was born in Angthong province; his coresident monk is unrelated and was assigned to live there because his previous residence was demolished.

But Phramaha Phak has interesting relationships with the novices and the *sidwat*. One novice is his *laan* (classificatory nephew) – he was ordained novice in Phramaha Phak's home village, and then came to live

with him here. The other novice is the brother of a monk who previously lived in the *khana* and is now a layman-schoolteacher.

The 10 *sidwat* are all living in the *khana* because of their direct relationship to the *chaokhana*, who has provided them with living quarters while they attend school in the capital. Two of the boys are his elder sister's sons (*laan*); three others are also his *laan* (classificatory nephews: *fa el si* grandchildren), all from Angthong. The remaining five boys are children of laymen from various provinces (Angthong, Ayutthaya, Singhburi, Supanburi) known to the monk.

The monk said that he "disciplines" the boys, who spend most of their time in the secular schools. He could not say how long they would reside with him: Some will leave after primary schooling, some after secondary schooling, and some may work their way up to the university. They were welcome to stay as long as they wanted. "The urban *wat* give places to stay for children from the provinces, and many monks use some of their own money to take care of them," he said.

The parents of the boys pay for the bulk of their school expenses, but the monk looks after them and spends some of his money for their food at school and for tuition fees.

The food collected by the monks and the novices is shared with the schoolboys, though each group eats separately.

4. Now we can tackle the more complex pattern of intra-*khana* relationships in a much larger wat. Wat Chakkravat with some 88 monks and 63 novices during the Lent of 1971 was divided into about 11 *khana*.

Khana 3 had under the formal charge of its *chaokhana*, Phrarachathammetti, 13 monks, 1 *navaga* (temporary), 10 novices, and 9 *sidwat*.

This collection of persons actually fragments into some 10 commensal groups, in that they are responsible for their food arrangements, which is a problem for this wat, located as it is in a nonresidential business district. Thus, for example, the *chaokhana* and two novices and two *sidwat*, who form his immediate dependents, form one group, and the *chaokhana* pays for their food expenses; another commensal group consists of two young monks and two *sidwat* who are nephews (a younger brother's sons) of one of the monks; a third group consisted of three monks, one *navaga*, and one *samanera*, who are unrelated but like to eat as a group; a fourth consists of two unrelated monks who eat together – they met at the wat; and so on.

Nevertheless, most of the *khana* members find their overarching link and their central focus in their *chaokhana*, who is somewhat remarkable in his patronage of able scholar-monks.

Born in Ubon province (northeast) in a farming family in 1921, Phrarachathammetti made his way to Bangkok by the usual route: A novice at the age of 16, and making two shifts from his original wat, he arrived in the capital to stay in Wat Anongkaram, where he was ordained monk, and again moved to Wat Chakkravat within a year to take the place of an *achan*-monk of his from the same village of origin.

Having passed Pali grade 6, he is qualified to teach in the monastic school; from 1950 to 1962 he was also the secretary (*lekha*) of his abbot,

who was then holding the prestigious position of regional ecclesiastical head. In due course Phrarachathammetti was rewarded with a *phraracha-khana* title. But the *chaokhun* (a term of reference and address for those who hold the preceding title) has an additional activity that brings him fame, clients, and gifts (including money) from laymen, which in turn provide him with the resources to lend financial support to young scholar-monks: He is a famous astrologer (*holasad*).

The *chaokhun* has financed the higher studies of four monks in India who are among his most distinguished *luksit:*

1. Phramaha T, who succeeded in passing Pali grade 9, studied for his M.A. in Pali at Nalanda University for three years. The *chaokhun* supported his stay in India by sending him 300–400 baht per month (and also provided the money for his travel). Pramaha T, who comes from Ubon, as his sponsor does, has returned to Ubon and is a titled monk there and destined to be an ecclesiastical luminary.

2. Pramaha M also comes from his sponsor's locality of origin. After he secured Pali grade 8, the *chaokhun* sent him to Nalanda for four years, giving the same kind of financial assistance (300–400 baht per month plus travel). Having obtained the M.A. degree in Pali, Pramaha M has returned to Wat Chakkravat, to live again in the same *khana* as his sponsor.

3. Pramaha P also lives in his sponsor's *khana,* having been sent to Benares University for his M.A. for two years (he already had his B.A. from Mahachulalongkorn University and was given a year's credit for it). He was given 400–500 baht per month plus travel fares. Pramaha P originally came from the province of Srisaket (northeast) and became the *chaokhun's luksit* by virtue of being put in his care as a novice.

4. The last scholar-monk similarly supported by the *chaokhun* comes from the latter's natal district. There being no vacant place in his *khana,* the *chaokhun* found him a place in a different Bangkok wat and has continued to be his patron. He has completed both Pali grade 8 and the B.A. degree at Mahamakut University. He too went in July 1971 for two years study in India, receiving the same scale of aid as Pramaha P.

5. *Khana* 4B at Wat Chakkravat is in its physical layout and personnel a most interesting place. It is in an enclosed compound, and there are five *khuti* arranged in circular pattern around a common *sala* (hall) in the center. Some of the *khuti* are large, and the population of the whole *khana* is 5 monks, 16 novices, and 32 *sidwat.*

The feature I want to highlight is that the five *khuti* house five more or less separate groupings within the larger *khana,* most of them having a geographical core:

Khuti 1: one monk, two novices, and five *sidwat* – all from the same northeastern province of Buriram. A monk who is 37 years old, enterprising as an astrologer and cultivating his clientele and lay supporters (*yom*), is the leader (*hua na*) and *achan.* This monk said that the five *sidwat* are his relatives from the same province, while the two novices are even more closely related as *laan fai phau* (patrilateral nephews). All eat together as a group (*ruam kan*) in the sense that the food collected in the morning

rounds is shared by all, while lunch during Lent is being regularly provided by three lay supporters.

Khuti 2: one monk from Hadyai province (south), four novices (two from Hadyai and two from Roiet (northeast), and three *sidwat* from Buriram province (northeast) – a mixed group. Morning food is collected on the rounds, while lunch is cooked in the *khuti* by novices (and *sidwat*). The monk and novices share expenses, the monk being the largest spender.

Khuti 3: one monk from Laos, four novices from Buriram, and eight *sidwat* (two from Buriram, six from Roiet, both northeastern provinces). This is a mixed group with same commensal arrangements as *khuti* 2.

Khuti 4: one monk, four novices, and nine *sidwat* – all from Chaiyaphum province (northeast). This group is held together by the monk, all the juniors being his kinsmen; the food arrangements are similar to those of *khuti* 2.

Khuti 5: one monk, two novices, and seven *sidwat*. The monk in charge is the retired ex-abbot of the wat; he is 83 years old. He and the *sidwat* come from the central region province of Chainat, all being kin. The novices are unrelated and come from Buriram. In this group the novices eat separately from the ex-abbot, who has a pious female *yom* who brings him his daily food; the *sidwat* also eat separately.

In sum, *khana* 4B, with such a large number of young school-going boys, although seemingly mixed, in fact has three geographical clusters – those from Buriram, the largest, Chaiyaphum, and Chainat (a fourth more dispersed contingent is from Roiet).

6. There are, besides the abbot, who is also the *chaokhana*, 12 monks, 13 novices, 1 *navaga*, and 7 *sidwat* living in *khana* 2 at Wat Chakkravat. The *khana* actually breaks up into five commensal groups, many of them finding their solidarity in locality and kinship bonds, which are enumerated as follows:

Group 1: the abbot, seven novices, and two *sidwat*. Two novices are the sons of the abbot's fellow villagers in his natal *tambon* in Nakhonracha-sima province, while the rest of the novices come from elsewhere in the northeast and have become his *luksit*.

The two *sidwat* are said to be the sons of the abbot's bygone *luksit*, that is, their parents themselves had been novices or *sidwat* in their time under the patronage of the abbot. The abbot takes care of the food wants of all the young boys in his immediate charge, paying for the cooked food bought from the nearby foodshops or for the items that are cooked by the novices. It was explained to me that as the novices receive higher ordination to become monks, they will leave the abbot's commensal group, though in other respects they remain his *luksit*.

Group 2: two young monks and a *navaga*, two *samanera*, and two *sidwat*. The monks and the *navaga* are unrelated, but they pool their funds for food. One novice is the nephew (*mo el br so*) of a monk, and the other is

unrelated. One of the *sidwat* is the younger brother of the second monk, while the second is placed there by an abbot. He has been described as the *laan* of *luang phau* and is actually the son of a man who was previously a monk – *luksit* of the abbot.

Group 3: a senior monk, 35 years old, who is the abbot's secretary, a junior monk, 21 years old, and a novice. The senior monk, who is also a very popular astrologer, provides for their food needs; the novice is the son of a family in the provinces known to this monk.

Group 4: three monks, two novices, and one *sidwat*. It may be called the Ubon group, since they all come from that province. The three monks actually come from the same commune (*tambon*), and the mainstay of the group is the most senior of them, who has the *phrakhru* title. The two novices are related to a second monk, one being a blood brother. The *sidwat* is the son of the elder brother of the third monk.

Group 5: two monks, who are unrelated and are fellow university students, live and eat as a group with two *dekwat*, one of who is a nephew (*laan*) of one monk, and the other the kinsman of a monk who lived in the same *khana* and has now disrobed.

The Sidwat, *the "Invisible" Population in Urban Wat*

In the previous detailed sketches, time and again we found that the category of lay youth, called *sidwat* or *dekwat*, was a numerically large and integral component of the wat's resident population. I call them "invisible" only in the sense that most studies of urban wat fail to evaluate the important process represented by the presence of these boys, setting them aside because they are not one of the categories of the ordained monastic inmates. They are a hidden factor, which is part and parcel of the process to which we have paid close attention – the process by which underprivileged rural youth embark on a religious career that also enables them to become educated, making it possible for those who choose monkhood as a lifelong vocation to achieve within the sangha and for those who leave it, to convert to a higher social position than they had been born into.

The *sidwat* are lay rural youth who are able to use the urban monasteries as their lodging houses and dormitories while they make use of the urban educational facilities. This free lodging and a good part of the board as well thus cut down on the educational expenses of rural families who might otherwise have not been able to afford to send their sons to the towns. Since most of the secondary and higher educational facilities in Thailand are located in towns, and the best of them in the capital, we can appreciate again how the monasteries are assisting in a process of social mobility, migration, and educational expansion. Monks may not have their own children, but they have plenty of surrogate children, all boys, who are their kin or the children of fellow villagers, whom they take care of and succor with a restrained but concerned paternalism. The boys, in return for lodg-

ing, food, care, and even monetary aid (by and large their parents pay for the school fees and expenses), sometimes accompany monks on their daily food rounds and on other trips, clean their living quarters, attend to their wants, and, sometimes, cook for them.

While most of the boys attend primary or secondary urban schools, some even live in the wat while attending university or teacher's or technical college, and the like. There is a small minority of young adults who while they hold jobs and are bachelors may continue to live in the wat during the early years of employment.

Khana No. 11 at Wat Chakkravat, was remarkable for the *chaokhana*'s providing living space for many *sidwat* of all ages. This case study illustrates well how a monk can become paradoxically the father of many children and the truth of the following comment made by a monk to me: "when a monk becomes famous, his fellow villagers claim kinship to him and say they are his *luk-laan* (children, nephews-nieces, and grandchildren)!

The *khana* was composed of 5 separate structures (*khuti*) in which lived 6 monks, 1 *navaga* and some 20 *sidwat*. My informant, a resident young monk, Phra P, told me that virtually all the *sidwat* were admitted by the *chaokhana*, a monk of *phrarachakhana* status, and then redistributed among the various *khuti*. All the boys and young men were his relatives or children of *yom* in his home province of Singhburi.

With the senior monk, in his *khuti*, lived 8 *sidwat* (no novices or monks) downstairs; in my informant's *khuti* lived 4 *sidwat* downstairs. All those *sidwat* who were attending school were fed by the senior monk. Although I was told that "there is a government regulation that *sidwat* should be *bona fide* students and not layabouts," I found that some of the *sidwat* were adults – one was a teacher, another worked for a company, and there were also a couple of junior government officials.

How large is the *sidwat* population in the country's monasteries? The statistics provided for 1968 by the Department for Religious Affairs are as follows: There is a grand total of 112,956 *sidwat* as compared with 174,873 monks and 108,504 novices. In region 1 (where Bangkok-Thonburi is located) there are 14,608 *sidwat* as compared with 20,715 monks and 4,610 novices.

Considering that the number of monks in these figures includes temporary monks (about 30%), the number of *sidwat* can be seen to be sizable, indeed as large as the regulars, in region 1. *Sidwat* are a large category of the inmates in many or most urban wat throughout the country (see Chart 1 in Chapter 13). As far as Bangkok-Thonburi is concerned, the following statistics collected by me for four wat in 1971 are indicative of the wat's role as dormitories for schoolboys. At Wat Mahathad, the largest monastery in the country, there lived during Lent some 250 monks (64 were temporary) and 83 novices, together with 369 *sidwat*, who thus surpassed in number the religious personnel. In Wat Chakkravat, where lived 92 monks (about 31 were temporary) and 60 novices, the *sidwat* numbered approximately 150, once again exceeding the regulars. In Wat Thongnopa-

kun, a small community, there lived in the years 1956–1971 some 558 *sidwat*. Finally, during the Lent of 1974, Wat Thatthong (Thammayut sect) had 44 regular monks, 72 *navaga*, 8 novices, and some 50 *sidwat*, once again confirming how the schoolboys match the regulars in number.

In the light of these considerations, I would propose that, at least for urban wat, the all-male monastic population[9] be conceived as following into the major categories as set out in Figure 15.2. The categories are hierarchically ranked, and the arrows indicate the relationships between them.

The Egocentric Networks of Monks and Novices

The total monastic network is a potential circuit, parts of which are activated essentially by individuals. We must, therefore, emphasize certain features that are characteristic of this network.

Within a wat dyadic relationships between individuals (e.g., between *achan* and *luksit*) are more important then relations among groups of monks (e.g., among *khana* residential groups). *Khana* relationships (which tend to be radial, converging on senior *achan*) in turn are more important than those of the wat as a collectivity. The wat as a collectivity takes shape for its members during the enactment of morning and evening worship (*tham wat chaw* and *tham wat yen*), the bimonthly recitation of the *patimokkha* and other acts of *sanghakamma*, and during the collective rites and festivals in which both the monastic inmates and the lay public participate and interact, whether they be the weekly *wanphra* or the annual festivals, fairs, and commemorations.

We should note that the *khana* groupings have no formally assigned educational activities or enactments of communal worship; such collective doings are done by all members of the wat in the *bod* or *wiharn* or *sala gaan parian* or the *rongrian*, the various halls that are the architectural pride of each wat. But, informally, *khana* may be the site of meditation classes, of special rites for clients, and for instruction. Anyway, while taking note of the fact that the wat community is stressed ritually as a collectivity, yet from another standpoint, from that of ongoing relationships, the *khana* are the scene of action, and the *achan-luksit* relationship is the elemental building block. In this connection, we may also mention that, as signified by the freedom of movement from wat to wat that is common among monks and novices, neither a wat nor a *khana* within it need be an entity of compelling and enduring affiliation, while the sponsorship relationships are more so.

The *khana* members, monks, novices (and *sidwat*) are not so much oriented to one another as to the *khana* leaders; and if the *khana*'s preeminent head, the *chaokhana*, holds the position of abbot or is invested

[9] *Maechi* (nuns), if they are found in wat, do not live in the monk's *khana* but live in special quarters or with the lay residents of the wat (*phuak wat*), who live quite separately.

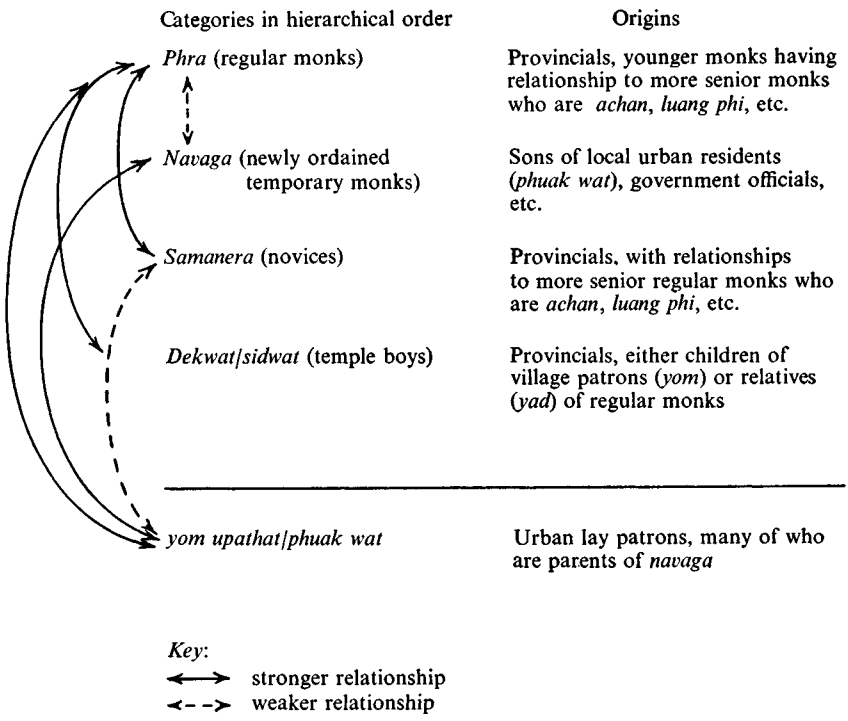

Categories in hierarchical order
Origins
Phra (regular monks)
Provincials, younger monks having relationship to more senior monks who are *achan*, *luang phi*, etc.
Navaga (newly ordained temporary monks)
Sons of local urban residents (*phuak wat*), government officials, etc.
Samanera (novices)
Provincials, with relationships to more senior regular monks who are *achan*, *luang phi*, etc.
Dekwat/sidwat (temple boys)
Provincials, either children of village patrons (*yom*) or relatives (*yad*) of regular monks
yom upathat/phuak wat
Urban lay patrons, many of who are parents of *navaga*
Key:
stronger relationship
weaker relationship

Figure 15.2. Population categories in Bangkok wat and their links.

with *somdet* or *phrarachakhana* rank, he in turn can confer titles on a certain number of assistants. Thus in a sense the ascent of the *sangha* hierarchy can begin in the *khana*.

We have seen that a marked feature of the dyadic relationships is their asymmetrical nature – they are between *achan* and *luksit*, teacher and pupil, sponsor and sponsored, superior and inferior, patron and client. Lateral, equal relationships among peers exist of course, but they are usually less important for the younger monks who are actively pursuing their vocations and careers and perhaps more significant for monks who hold high office and can exchange favors and influence high-level sangha decisions.

Thus we are led by these facts to talk of the egocentric networks of monks and novices, that is, the web of links that ego, if we take him to be the anchorage or point source, uses and exploits in his career. I am not concerned here with a monk's or novice's links with laymen – lay sponsors and patrons, whether kinsman or not, donors of gifts and givers of daily food – whom he necessarily must cultivate and maintain to secure his material needs, but only with his links with other members of the sangha.

Ego's network must necessarily change its features as he travels the path

from a student-novice and a student-monk to an established titled monk and, finally, an old influential monk (to plot an idealized life cycle). In large monastic centers, whether in the provincial towns or at the capital, a novice's most significant link would usually be with the *chaokhana*, the leader of the residential group, who would act as his sponsor or patron, helping him materially with money and food, and so on. Individual novices may also have a special relationship with an older monk in the same *khana*, a kinsman or fellow villager, whom he calls a *luang phi;* such links are more visible in large *khana* that divide into smaller groupings. By and large while novices may have friendly relationships with other fellow novices, these are not important for their vocational progress. Novices do not have overtly expressed intimate relations with monks in general; in fact there tends to be a restrained relation, verging on avoidance between them except with those previously mentioned.[10] One could without too much distortion say that novices and young monks are each focused dyadically on influential monks in the wat – first toward their own *chaokhana* or more senior sponsors and then upward toward the abbot. There are not necessarily any close ties between students and their teachers within the wat, except in the case of the promising and gifted scholars. We should note that a *khana* as such, composed of monks, novices, and *sidwat*, is rarely a strongly bounded group with dense relationships, unless there is an exceptional *chaokhana* leader who welds them together by the practice of collective eating, distinctive religious practices such as meditation and so forth. In other words, usually the lateral links among the members of a *khana* are not dense; each member is primarily focused on the leader or patron.

A novice or young monk, whether in a large provincial or Bangkok-Thonburi wat, necessarily relies on this kind of web of relations until he successfully reaches a commendable level in his Pali and, nowadays, university studies. As soon as he completes his education, he can begin to play an influential role in his wat and even outside. Being a *phramaha* he will most certainly teach in the *pariyattitham* school run by his wat (or seek employment as a teacher at one of the two universities or other adult schools run by the religious authorities). In due course he may win the ecclesiastical title of *phrakhru*, then the coveted *phrarachakhana* rank; he will serve as an assistant (*phuchuay*) to his abbot or another titled monk and work his way up the wat hierarchy as *lekha* (secretary), *phrakhru*, deputy abbot, and so on, if he is so interested; he may be appointed a *chaokhana* and thus become responsible for his own residential group. Monks who have such titles and administrative roles are referred to as *phra thananukrom* (an expression used in contemporary wat records).

At this stage a monk's attention is focused downward on young monks and novices for whom he is a patron, and he himself look upward to his abbot or other titled influential or famous monks inside his wat and else-

[10] Monks and novices have to be circumspect in their conduct lest they are suspected of the vice of homosexuality.

where in the sangha at large, as, for example, ecclesiastical heads of various ranks or, still higher, members of the Sangha Council of Elders (*Mahatherasamakhom*) or leaders of missionary action programs (*thammathud*) or famed educators. Incidentally, as a monk ascends this network, he also forges links with influential laymen – administrators, police and army generals and colonels, rich businessmen, and so on. Other routes are the successful practice of astrology, propagation of meditation, a flair for efficacious rites, which also attracts a large lay clientele.

Figure 15.3 attempts to portray the vertical dyadic relations among four levels of persons who reside in a wat: the abbot and perhaps his deputy and/or a few famous monks of high rank who have dealings with the heads of the residential groups, the teachers, and influential monks on the make, who in turn have dealings with the hierarchized personnel living in their *khana,* the junior monks, novices, and temporary monks, and, finally, the temple boys.

I have not diagramed the *external* (extra-wat) lateral and vertical relations of the higher-level monks themselves. The diagram is simplified and not sensitive to complex details – for example, that the abbot himself is often the head of a *khana* and therefore has his own protégés among all levels and that famous scholar-monks or meditation teachers or astrologers may have a following of pupils from novices and monks who do not reside in his own *khana.* Yet it conveys the most general features of the vertical relations within a wat. The lateral relations at levels 3 and 4 among junior monks, novices, and temporary monks, and between them and temple boys, are also represented, but while they are not insignificant as friendship links, they are not channels for the passage of material gifts and favors in a downward direction and of loyalty and esteem in an upward direction as happens between superiors and inferiors. This partial diagram of the network within a wat (partial because it leaves out external links) also shows that what we previously described as egocentric or personal networks are really fragments or pieces of a larger framework.[11]

But there is another sense in which the personal network of a monk or novice is worth abstracting and looking at in its own right. Because a novice or a monk who is currently residing in Bangkok-Thonburi has, if he is a migrant as he usually is, on the average resided in three or four different wat in the course of his career, it is clear that whatever lateral links he has made with peers, especially in the early part of his career, are fragile and soon forgotten and that the only links from his past he is likely to remember as a diachronic chain are those with his different sponsors and patrons – his abbots, *achan, upacha* (ordainer), *luang phi, chaokhana,* and so forth. These ties with past patrons, while remembered, are not active in his daily life at the capital and are usually activated only when the monk in an urban wat returns to his natal village and province, as he not infrequently does in the post-Lent season (when activities in his wat come to a stand-

[11] Here I agree with Barnes (1969) vis-à-vis Mitchell: J. A. Barnes "Networks and Political Process," in Mitchell (1969).

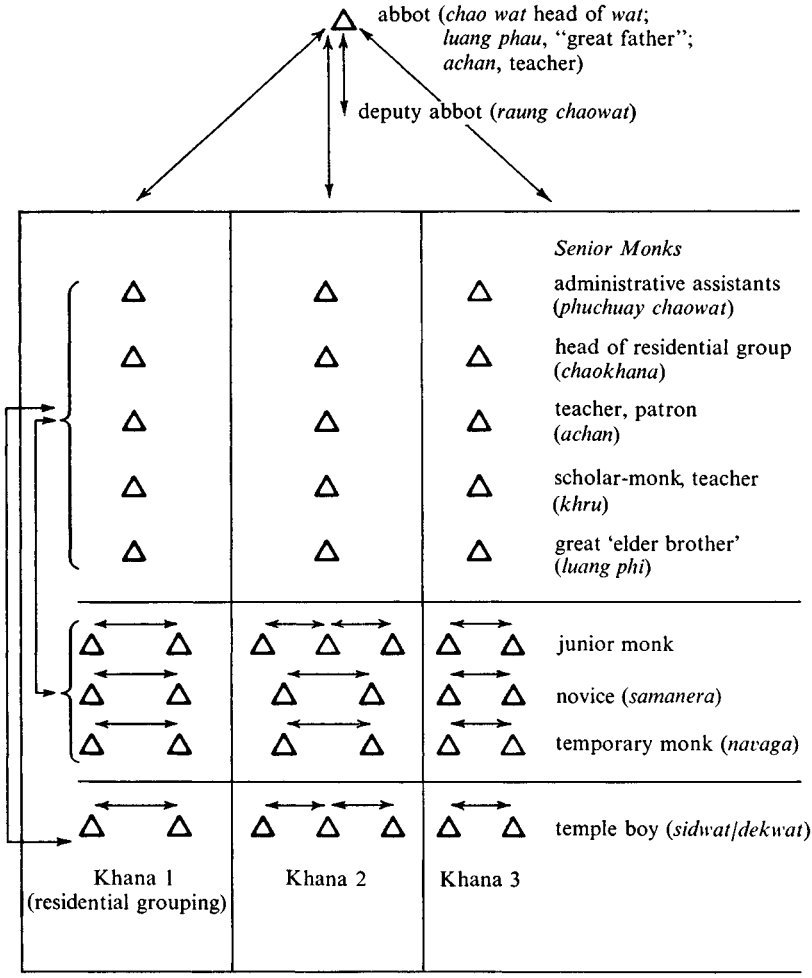


Figure 15.3. Vertical Dyadic Relations within a wat.
There are usually four formal divisions in the charge of administrative assistants (*phuchuay chaowat*), most of whom have earned the title of *phrakhrum*.

Note: The general administrative scheme of a hypothetical Bangkok wat is as follows:
1. Administration (*phokraung*) in the charge of a secretary (*lekha*)
2. Education (*suksa*) in the charge of a head teacher (*achan yai*) and other teachers
3. Propagation of religion (*phoeiphae*) in the charge of an assistant
4. Welfare and maintenance (*sathanupakan*) in the charge of assistants – for example, the *phrakhrupalat*, who oversees buildings and repairs, and the *hua na phra men* (head of the crematorium, also in charge of ritual articles), another assistant who keeps the roster of monks assigned to recite and officiate at rites, usually mortuary rites

The number of assistants engaged in these tasks is variable, depending on the size and activities of the wat. Some monks double up as administrative assistants, teachers, heads of the residential group (*chaokhana*), etc.

In addition, there is usually the *gamakaan* wat (the wat committee) in which the abbot, his deputy, and his assistants (or, in other cases, all monks holding *rachakhana* or *phrakhru* titles) serve. The *waiyawachakon*, a layman accountant, assists the abbot in dealing with finances and attends meetings when financial decisions are made.

still, especially from around February–March to June of each year) or when his past patrons themselves visit the capital. (As we shall see later, influential monks from the capital often organize *kathin* processions and presentations to their previous provincial wat where reside their past sponsors.) Thus on the whole one can say that a monk's relations with his peers tend to be both short-lived and fragile, with his past patrons durable but sporadic, with his present sponsors frequent and continuing. Once a novice or a monk has come to his terminal wat in Bangkok-Thonburi, it is there that he is likely to make his most durable relationships first as a subordinate *luksit* and later as a superior *achan*.

All in all one could describe the networks of individual monks as being open knit rather than close knit, flexible rather than rigid, with their durability determined more by situational factors than by obligatory norms. Furthermore, while one must necessarily characterize the relations between individual monks and novices as dyadic and hierarchical, one must also emphasize that the monastic life shows an autonomy in individual lives, the relationships among monks not only being voluntary and optative but also characterized by restraint and withdrawal. The twin aspects of social life in a wat thus are hierarchical relationships among persons who keep their contacts to a minimum.

Inter-Wat Relationships and Networks

In the light of the foregoing, how are we to deal with inter-wat relationships? Let us begin with the proposition that interwat relationships are also by and large dyadic relations among individual members rather than among wat as wholes.

But the matter is more complex, because the linkages between the abbots and high-ranking and prominent monks in different wat may result in our meaningfully seeing whole wat as being implicated because of the influence these monks wield over their juniors. Our description and discussion of *achan* and *luksit* relations, in their various facets and refractions, inevitably make it possible for an able pupil, when he attains to high educational qualifications and rank, to become an abbot or influential monk in another wat, especially in the provinces, and thereby to influence its character or to ascend higher in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and as provincial or regional head to influence the allegiance of subordinate abbots and office-holders. Such developments can make possible the emergence of networks of influence and allegiance between parent monasteries where the *achans* live and satellite or dependent monasteries where the illustrious pupils exert control. In such networks the prominent monasteries in the national and provincial capitals may well play the role of parent monasteries.

In this discussion we can find a certain amount of illumination in C. Reynolds' documentation (1973, p. 221, passim) of how, during the 1890s – when the Chulalongkorn-Damrong-Wachirayan partnership was promoting

a national Bangkok-controlled integrated system of civil and ecclesiastical administration – the phenomenon of dependent monasteries as an obstruction to the new blueprint was discovered by the Department of Religious Affairs and by Wachirayan's education directors.

Dependent relationships refer to the relationship of dependence on the part of certain monasteries on parent monasteries; this dependence refers to the kind of influence an abbot of one monastery may have in another monastery through a talented pupil of his who goes there and becomes the abbot or gathers a following around him. Hence the regulation of the succession to abbotships was of cardinal importance to the centralizing administration if it was to break down existing networks of influence among monasteries.

On further scrutiny it appears that the content of dependency really implied two things: It apparently meant (1) that certain disputes that could not be solved within the wat might be adjudicated by the abbot of the parent wat (without requiring the intervention of civil authorities) and (2) that the annual register of monks of a dependent monastery was forwarded to the Bangkok authorities via the parent monastery. The education directors at the end of the past century found the dependent relationships disorderly and objectionable because their perspective of orderliness was the creation of a nationally uniform hierarchy of authority whereby the monasteries would be placed unambiguously under the jurisdiction of district, provincial, and regional heads.

In any case, it is clear that adjudication of disputes and the collection of registers today are no longer the basis of dependency. In this sense, the successive Sangha Acts since 1902 have done their work. Leaving aside the Thammayut sect, which has its own head and special status, we find that monastic disciplinary matters are without contention likely to be reviewed and settled, if they cannot be resolved internally, by the appropriate territorial ecclesiastical heads, the more serious issues being pronounced upon by the Mahatherasamakhom itself. Similarly, annual registers go upward along the same channels, from abbot to *tambon* head to district head, and so on, and finally to the Department of Religious Affairs. In other words, in many ways the official hierarchy provides the channels for sangha transactions. We shall in the next chapter see in detail exactly what are the scope and the quality of the official framework.

The official framework does not by any means exhaust inter-wat relationships. The extraofficial network exists, as has been amply established by our previous documentation of monastic careers, patron-client relationships, and so on. But we must be careful how we represent them.

We should beware – this stricture applies to the previous century as well – of giving inter-wat relations an undue solidity by conceiving whole monasteries as being the units of affiliation and loyalty, when surely what we are dealing with are the activities of abbots, their assistants and retinues, and by suggesting these affiliations to be persisting through the generations.

The *achan-luksit* relationships today are not long-lived and not usually transmitted (like other known cases of pupillary succession) from *guru* to disciple, incumbent to successor through long periods of time. Pupillary succession (with the line of successors forming a kind of monastic lineage) is markedly characteristic of Ceylon and Burma and deserves a short digression here.

Like the concept of apostolic succession in Christianity, the notion of valid ordination has played an important part in Theravada societies, particularly Ceylon and Burma (and less so in Thailand except for the somewhat stricter Thammayut sect). It is integrally related to the concept of *parampara* (monastic ordination lineage) implying pupillary succession and links through time between the ordainer and his disciples.

In a larger sense, pupillary succession and *parampara* ramify with the spasmodic purgings of the alleged degenerate sangha by kings and their restoration of *upasampada* ordination and the establishment of a new line by either sending to another Theravada country a mission of monks to be ordained anew or by receiving from it a mission who would ordain at home. Thus valid ordination partly at least underlies the historical exchange of missions among Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand and the cross referencings of purifications and the establishments of new lineages in these countries. This again partly illuminates why Theravada sectarianism focuses so intensely on matters of disciplinary and ritual practices (ordination procedures, style of dress, etc.) as diacritical marks and conferrers of valid succession. But the interesting fact of course is that the institution of pupillary succession itself has no basis in strict canonical law and constitutes a development that is part and parcel of the sangha-polity interconnections and exchanges.

There is another underpinning to the preoccupation with *parampara* and rightful succession, and it plays its firmest role in Ceylon and perhaps its weakest in Thailand. The difference reveals why in the latter notions of *parampara* are weak, particularly in the numerically predominant Mahanikai sect. The phenomenon in question is the so-called monastic landlordism, which is a historical product in Ceylon of endowments of agricultural properties (and associated irrigation works) and incomes of villages, and so on, to the sangha by kings and laymen. This monastic landlordism interweaves the issue of succession to management, control, and transmission of temple property with the question of pupillary succession. By the nineteenth century the vesting of the ownership of the monastery and its estate in the hands of the head or incumbent of the monastery (*viharadhipati*) had in Ceylon reached its maximal expression.[12]

The Sinhalese rules of succession were essentially of two types: (1) *sisyanu sisya paramaparava* and (2) *sivuru paramparava* or *jnati sisya paramparava*.[13] In the former the chief incumbency of the *vihare* and

[12] See H. W. Tambiah 1962; Bechert 1966 (vol. I); 1970.

[13] In the Kandyan provinces also known as *pewidi parampara*.

its lands and property would devolve only on that chosen pupil to whom an absolute gift is made; an uninterrupted succession of pupils is thereby created; and the qualification for pupilage itself is that a monk be robed or ordained by the gifting incumbent. The second mode of succession is more restrictive in that the incumbent ordains a kinsman as monk who becomes successor; and even if a kinsman had not been so ordained during the lifetime of the incumbent-proprietor, a kinsman could be ordained after his death and made his successor. This succession rule creates a line of kinsmen as incumbents.[14] It is interesting that during British rule the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance of 1889 (and its successors) sought to vest the management of the *vihare* property and income in the hands of a committee of lay trustees (thus creating a distinction between monk-incumbent and lay-trustee), but many *vihares* and their estates (mostly belonging to the Siyam *nikaya*) were given exemption and have enjoyed the privilege of the old rules of management and succession; and in modern times this consideration has constituted an obstacle to the formation of a national sangha organizational structure with regulatory powers.

Thailand presents a strong contrast. The conferring of royal status on certain wat, on wat founded by kings or by laymen and gifted to the king, did not imply large endowments of property (outside the monastic compound, *thi wat*, itself); rather, it meant that, as noted earlier, the royal wat receive *kathin* gifts from the king or his representatives, that the abbotships are today filled by the *Mahatherasamakhom*, which is indexical of the bonding of the sangha to the polity via the ecclesiastical hierarchy.[15]

Our description of the web of inter-wat relationships prevailing in Thailand today can be summarized in these successive steps: young novices in faraway villages find places in a succession of monasteries, the terminal ones being in provincial and national capitals, through the mediation of sponsors of two kinds: (1) abbots, ecclesiastical heads, and the like, who can be classified as *achan* and (2) novices and monks who are kin or from the same locality and have preceded them to the monastery in which a place is sought.

In the famous wat of Bangkok-Thonburi the *achan-luksit* and patron-client relations between more senior monks and their juniors are highly developed. Abbots, heads of *khana*, and leaders of smaller constellations with *khana* quite deliberately recruit novices and young monks, some of whom are kin, from their localities of origin. They also provide living space to *sidwat* of the same origins. Thus in most wat in the capital there are

[14] A good example of this is the historical Ridi *vihare*, whose incumbency rests with the Tibbottuwave family.

[15] Thai wat do of course own certain kinds of property. See Chapter 16 for information on the categories of property and the methods of management. Overall, the vast majority of Thai monasteries materially depend on the offerings and gifts of laymen and not on their historic endowments of property outside the confines of monastic compounds.

multiple geographical cores and groupings, which have been recruited from numerous provincial wat (and villages). What gives them a larger identity is their regional origins, not their previous wat. While Bangkok-trained monks who return to the provinces to hold influential positions may send novices and young monks in their constituencies to their parent wat in the capital, this mode of brokerage and recruitment does not create systematic relationships between certain provincial wat and the metropolitan wat as wholes, for those who find their way to the metropolis trickle in from diverse parts and on diverse pathways. But there are instances, as we have seen, in which certain wat may systematically recruit from particular regions, and if they happen to be of the Thammayut persuasion, whose numbers are limited, then this fact alone could produce longstanding inter-wat relations with respect to recruitment.

But apart from recruitment as such, are there not other contexts of activity that might produce inter-wat links? Factionalism in the sangha may result in the abbots and his supporters in a wat being counted as carrying whole wat with them into the contending camps. Once again for various reasons the Thammayut wat are more capable of such congealing than the more flabby and diversified and much larger Mahanikai wat.

There is another unusual context in which numerous wat could be mobilized via their leadership to follow a charismatic leader's program for religious action. We have already noted how Phra Pimolatham, no doubt using his position as minister of interior in the sangha administration, actively promoted the spread of meditation, which involved the bringing of numerous provincial abbots to the capital for training and indoctrination. On their return, they committed their wat to the promotion of meditation among both monks and laymen. It is conceivable that other similarly placed monks can sponsor other programs, such as *thammathud*,[16] and effect a commitment through a similar mode of mobilization.

In the past century it was probably the case that the prominent monasteries of Bangkok and Thonburi did not maintain contacts and exert influence over monasteries at great distances from the capital. Given the state of communications, administrative structures of the galactic type, and regional varieties of Buddhism prevailing then, it is probable that the spheres of contact and influence were circumscribed; but one should not rule out the possibility – which we know to be true of some individual monks in the nineteenth century – of the passage of village boys along the monastic path, sometimes from faraway places, to the preeminent capital. Today, as our documentation has shown, Bangkok-Thonburi's field of magnetic attraction of village youth is far flung and potent, a sure manifestation of the radial polity.

[16] A program described in Chapter 18.

Why Ordination?

Anthropologists who have done village studies in different parts of Thailand have en passant commented on the factors associated with a youth's becoming a novice or a monk. In these comments no rigid separation has been made between subjective motivations and monastic experiences of the youths themselves and the socioeconomic circumstances that define their background.

Let us look at the alleged reasons operating in northern Thailand, where, as I have indicated earlier, the custom is for young boys to become novices for a certain period of time (rather than for young men to become ordained temporarily for one Lenten season).

Moerman conveniently summarizes the meager evidence thus:

> de Young (1958:118) says: "Village surveys in the north have shown that about half of village males spend some time in the *wat* as a temple boy. Those that do not do so generally come from families that cannot spare the boys from farmwork." On the other hand, Kingshill (1960:101) asserts that: "According to our survey, the kind of homes novices /and temple boys/ come from is not related to economic circumstances of the household." In Ban Ping, "I did not have enough merit" was the uniform answer to my question, "Why weren't you ordained?" . . . When an old Chiengkham priest mentioned, as though it were self-evident, that only poor boys made the temple their career, his audience of villagers quickly denied the idea, probably for reasons of politeness (1966, p. 169).

Moerman goes on to say of his village in the Chiengrai province that there are several reasons why a boy might desire to be ordained: the religious reason of wishing to acquire merit, the attractiveness of being the center of attention in the drama of the elaborate ordination ceremony, the appreciation that one would be the recipient of gifts and special food, and so on. Such motivations are, as far as my experience goes, general. Moerman also confirms the plausibility of de Young's view that only households with surplus labor could spare boys to become novices and also that it is now from households of surplus members that come the young men who undertake monkhood as a career.

As regards the rest of Thailand, we must consider young boys who become novices (from whom again the majority of regular monks emerge) separately from young men who become temporary monks. As regards the latter, Kaufman stated of the village of Bangkhuad (located near Bangkok) that on the whole the men ordained came from economically middle-range families rather than poor families. It is true of course that the ordination ceremony involves a certain expenditure of money and that the very poor probably are less able to afford it than more affluent rural families. But if one were to judge from one's own experience of the northeast and central provinces, it is clear that poor boys who want to become ordained do not necessarily find the financial obstacle insurmountable – very often the

village collectively ordains novices and monks, and also quite often a sponsor can be found to foot the bill because he gets the prestige of being a sponsor as well as receiving some of the merit that the youth will acquire by donning the robes.

But on the whole extreme poverty does hold back persons from the benefits of temporary monkhood. If one may once again project from one's narrow urban experience, I found that in two Bangkok-Thonburi wat the majority of new temporary monks ordained in 1971 were either junior government officers or young men from lower-middle-class families – sons of traders, shopkeepers, minor government officers – who having completed technical rather than university education were about to settle down to adult work. Sons of wage laborers were on the whole absent.

In this book, however, we are not interested so much in the careers of temporary monks (*navaga*) as in those of novices and regular monks who are currently residing in the capital's monasteries as a longer-term commitment. And looking at their backgrounds and circumstances, especially of those who originated in the villages, one can make the following assertions:

While it is not possible to furnish country-wide statistical correlations between recruitment and family size (as indexical of surplus labor) or birth order or economic rank within the village economic system (see Chapter 14 for some suggestive data), it is possible to state – when one compares the economic level of rural peasant families with that of families in the commercial, professional, and administrative sectors of urban areas – that the vast majority of novices and monks residing today in the capital have come from poor rural homes and that the monastic network provides for them an alternative way of acquiring education and economic security, which they could not secure by ordinary secular means.

We can be confident of the socioeconomic background of the regulars in the capital. We are less well informed and equipped to give a detailed phenomenological account of the cognitions of the candidates to novicehood and monkhood, what their subjective orientations to and expectations and experiences of the religious status were, and how indeed they grew into their roles through time. We are, however, not altogether unable to give some account of these subjective experiences. Some of the motivations that led to the young boys' being ordained as novices are readily seen – making merit for oneself and one's parents, the drama of the ordination rite in which they are the principal actors, the attraction that good food, special gifts, and a life of greater leisure has for boys from poor hard-working families, the striking reversal by which young boys in robes receive the respectful gestures and words of their former elderly kinsmen and superiors. It is also clear that many of the novices, who have scholastic abilities and aspirations and who for mainly economic reasons cannot continue with their schooling, are readily directed toward ordination. What we must be more silent about here, not for want of appreciation as for

want of words, is the attraction of the monk's vocation itself as seen by the ordinands as part and parcel of their overall taken-for-granted comprehensively suffusing totality of Buddhist values and culture. Since learning the dhamma is usually considered by the actors as being synonymous with learning to read and write and translate the Pali and other religious texts, the educational aspirations and the desire for acquisition of religious knowledge are conflated. This smooth engagement of educational aspirations and religious knowledge is something we can apprehend more easily. Thus, as their own biographical accounts portray, the novices who make it to the capital via the monastic route do become interested in the learning of dhamma, the chants and recitations, the Pali language, and so on, and show an aptitude for that learning. Concurrently, the major disciplinary rules of the monk's regimen are internalized and by and large adhered to, and the monks' outward behavior is publicly recognizable as a contrast to the more agitated and uninhibited sensate behavior of laymen.

One gets some glimpses of an experience that is associated with the "homeless" path from village to the metropolis via intervening wat: that somehow for these youth of rural background, living in urban environments that are not theirs by birth or early training may in important ways isolate them from lay society and provide them with some distancing and noninvolvement with the life around them. This distancing is congruent with features of the classical Buddhist quest for detachment and tranquillity.

I would therefore by no means underestimate or denigrate or devalue the spiritual and intellectual satisfaction that many regular monks and novices must enjoy from studying and understanding a compelling philosophical system or meditating and finding psychic illumination from practicing certain religious techniques or even simply living detached lives within the walls of the monastery. There are many monks and novices in the capital who shine with the virtues of their religious quest.

These things granted, I must reiterate that the objective of education through monkhood is a most weighty one, frankly acknowledged by a multitude of young monks and novices residing in the capital. As we have seen already, it is mainly those who pass the *naktham* examinations and the lower Pali examinations who show the requisite ambition to move on to the bigger urban centers; and, equally importantly, it is the successful and able rather than the slow and dull who are recruited and accepted by the capital's larger and famous monasteries. Thus we must appreciate the double aspect of mobility and recruitment: There is the "push" factor, which is the young novice's ambition and aptitude to study further, and there is the "pull" factor, which is the active recruitment by the famous wat of the land of able and intelligent novices. Both sides in this encounter have complementary interests and mutually benefit each other, and the various patrons and intermediaries who assist young men along the monastic network make possible the realization of the interests of both parties, while themselves gaining influence and prestige in the process.

A scholar monk who is also an enthusiastic educator confirmed that an active and selective recruiting process is at work. Since the majority of monks in the capital are from the provinces and since they in turn have links with monks in the provincial *wat*, the process of finding able and aspiring novices is relatively easy. The abbot in the provinces, or some similar responsible monk, selects the brightest novices from that group which has completed 2–3 years' education at his *wat* and often personally brings them to the capital to find places for them. Since monks and novices are charged only half the normal train fare, transport is cheap. In recent years, this traditional process of recruitment is being tightened up, because there are too many candidates wanting to come and the capital's *wat* are becoming overcrowded. So in fact a reaction has set in whereby the standards for entry are becoming strict, especially in terms of educational levels already reached. My informant also confirmed that the largest number of novices coming to the capital come from the Northeast, because it is there that secular schools are still inadequate in number, and also relatively inaccessible because of poor communications. Under the circumstances, an efficacious way to become educated is to join the *sangha* whose network gives reasonable chances for the novices to eventually come to Bangkok-Thonburi.

Once firmly set in the monastic vocation and its pursuits, there are several satisfactions available that fall within the limits of sangha orthodoxy as it now prevails. The various forms of sponsorship enable senior monks, as a result of educational, administrative, astrological, ritual, and mystical achievements, to derive the satisfaction of meritorious helping of their needy juniors and of giving solace to the laity, and, in the process, attracting and cultivating their followings and retinues.

In addition to all these, I would like to underline two other satisfactions that clearly operate in Thailand:

1. The first is what I would call "status compensation." Visualize a poor rural boy from a farming family in a remote part of Thailand; now imagine him in Bangkok with some measure of education, perhaps invested with a title, living in comparative physical comfort in the capital's most imposing architectural monuments (indeed most urban monks' residential conditions are far superior to those of the majority of urban dwellers in the capital). But above all observe him having dealings with and receiving the obeisance and respect of the country's powerful and affluent, the controllers of deference-entitlements in the secular world, with whom no ordinary villager in the normal course of his life could hope to come into contact, let alone receive their prostrations and their respectful addresses. One cannot but sense the social immunity and protection as well as the psychic satisfaction these village-born monks must derive when they are being lionized by the middle and upper classes, the powerful and the mighty – at least in terms of outward etiquette, social intercourse, and feasting. Add to these gains the fact that the monastic hierarchy is a path of achievement – there are titles, offices of influence, and privileges and control of real resources at stake – that is there to be exploited by villagers *without competition from the urban population.* In return a supreme sacrifice is re-

quired that monks and novices bind themselves to a life of discipline and quietude and observance of the rules laid down in the *vinai* (*vinaya*), particularly those that relate to chastity and restraint in eating.

Rabibhadana makes a statement about traditional Thai society (1782–1873) that reinforces my observations:

> It is to be suspected that the custom of entering the monkhood functioned as a safety-valve in the status-dominated society. We have noted that one way of avoiding government corvée was by entering monkhood. Entering monkhood also serves to relieve a person from the domination and oppression of his superior. When one entered the sacred world [i.e., became a monk], the relationship between *nai* [noble] and *phrai* [commoner] *phu-yai – phu noi* to which one was subjected in the profane world ceased, at least for the time one was in the yellow robe. Being a monk, one could see one's superior in the profane world, one's *nai* or parents whom one had revered and obeyed pay respect to oneself . . . (1969, p. 123).

2. Another major satisfaction that is to be derived from monkhood – I would claim that either explicitly or implicitly this is a motivation for many youths spending long years as novice and monk – is that it not only allows for the acquisition of education but also enables the disrobing novice or monk to find an occupation consonant with his educational qualification. Traditionally, until the late nineteenth century, when monastic schools were the major educational institutions, the connection between donning the robe by intellectually endowed but deprived youth, and the payoff in the lay world subsequently in terms of a superior social position must have been clearly recognized. Today, when secular education at all levels is spreading, this path becomes relevant only to the underprivileged; but this category is by no means small.

Jane Bunnag summed up an aspect of her investigation of laymen who had been regular or permanent monks as follows:

> [M]y work amongst the lay members of Ayutthaya society throws new light on the function of the monkhood as a possible channel of mobility, in that it shows that a period of service in the monkhood may enable a man to re-enter lay life at a higher position on the socio-economic ladder than that which he originally renounced. This is to say that these *bhikkhus* from farming families who belong to urban monastic communities will rarely return to the rice-fields should they decide to de-robe, but stay on in town, typically entering the lower clerical ranks of the civil service. Indeed many of the laymen whom I came to know very well in their capacity as members of the monastery lay committee (*kammakan wat*) were civil servants with this kind of background who had come to town as monks. Their service in the Sangha had equipped them with the education and with the contacts necessary to obtain a clerical post in the civil service. As laymen their familiarity with both the bureaucratic and the ecclesiastical machinery made them uniquely qualified to act as liaison officers between the Sangha and the civil service, as well as between the ordinary townspeople and the monastic community (1973, p. 46).

One way in which the regular monks who disrobe from Bangkok differ from their provincial brethren in Ayutthaya is that many of them make even more remarkable leaps of social mobility. Buddhist monkhood as an avenue of social mobility has a long history.

Appendix to Chapter 15. Monastic Networks in Christian Europe and Thailand

It is possible that our analysis of the monastic network in Thailand might profit by comparison with the forms of intermonastery organization in Western Christianity (the Eastern church is a different matter), particularly the three major organizational models as provided by the (early) Benedictine, Clunian, and Cistercian orders.[1]

St. Benedict's conception of the monastery was that each was a "separate family of renunciation." The monastic cell with its self-contained economy was conceived for a rural Europe facing the pulverization of the eighth century and fragmenting to its smallest possible self-supporting units. "St. Benedict founded no order; he did not even send out from Monte Cassino a succession of colonies" (Knowles 1962, p. 8). His great heritage was the Benedictine Rule (A.D. 529), which was voluntarily accepted by existing monastic communities or was imposed by his followers on the monasteries they founded. An integral feature of the idea of an independent, self-sufficient cell was the rule of stability, which Benedict said would remove from the monks the need to go abroad, for this was considered gravely harmful to their souls. Another integral regulation was the rule of obedience, obedience prompt and *sine mora* to God and abbot. We shall return to these rules later.

Circumstances in the eleventh century demanded a new organizational breakthrough suited to the circumstances of great population increase and the technology of the new heavy plow and the possibilities of colonization and productive expansion. It is in this context that the Cluniac model of monastic organization came into its own. The Cluniacs forged the *connectional* principle by which the various monasteries of the order formed congregations under the hierarchical leadership of Cluny; these monasteries, united to guard the common maintenance of the Rule, at the same time sought exemption from the control of bishops. The Cluniac blueprint thus was an answer to the weakness of the Benedictine monasteries hitherto isolated as separate units: "Each was a law unto itself, chiefly dependent for character upon the character of the head. . . . There was a lack of responsibility to outside authority. . . . As a consequence there were few checks to prevent the fall of a convent into evil, when once the inner enthusiasm for renunciation had been lost" (Workman 1927, pp. 235–236).

Cluny was founded in Burgundy in A.D. 910. And by the mid-twelfth century there were 300 dependent monasteries of the parent foundation. The monks

[1] For example, see Workman (1927), Knowles (1962, 1963), Décarreaux (1964), Trevor-Roper (1966).

of Cluny were successful colonizers, and unlike the independent and equal Benedictine abbeys "the Cluniac houses were a disciplined, organized system, controlled from the top, from the abbey of Cluny itself, and so capable of a united policy in the Christian world" (Trevor-Roper 1966, pp. 116–117). And the Cluniac monasteries became enormously wealthy, and their internationalism also helped the centralization of wealth. The worldliness of Cluny was reflected in its vast church, which was declared the largest and most beautiful in Christendom and whose candlesticks were described by its critic, St. Bernard, as "great trees of brass, glittering as much through their jewels as their lights."

The Cluniac model, in time, proved problematic on account of its top-heaviness. The burden of discipline of the united order rested upon the abbot of Cluny, and if he slackened, the results for this overcentralized system could be appalling.

Thus we come to the third great organizational grid developed by the Cistercian order. The monastery of Citeaux founded in 1098 in Champagne owed its real success to Bernard (1090–1153). The success of the new order can be gauged by the fact that within 40 years Citeaux in turn had founded 160 daughter houses, 68 of which were filiations of the most illustrious offshoots of Citeaux, Bernard's own foundation. The order proliferated greatly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and coincided with the great advance in the colonization of Europe, whose center was now the lands north of the Alps, "the power house of the Crusades." As Trevor-Roper has put it: "The new Cistercian abbeys . . . were stricter and more puritan. They were also more up-to-date in economy and purpose. They were organized for advance, for colonization. They were centrally controlled, yet flexible: each house sent out its own colony, and that colony would send out another, always pushing forward in the wake of feudal power, opening up new lands. The Cistercian monks are essentially great agricultural exploiters, great cattle raisers, and, in forward areas, colonizers of the waste." (pp. 121–122).

The following were the chief organizational principles of the Cistercian order: As opposed to the centralized authority of the abbot of Cluny, with the Cistercians "each foundation was an independent abbey, and not a subject priory to its parent" (Workman 1927, p. 243). However, the connectional principle was enforced throughout by means of a unity of usages and rules, annual congregations at the parent house, Citeaux, of all abbots, the granting of a prevailing voice to the abbot of Citeaux in the congregation of which he was president, and also the right of visitation by him of any monastery at will. Independent of all episcopal authority, the Cistercians in due course bound themselves to the pope by oaths of direct obedience and thereby also became an international network with its ultimate head centered in Rome. They had amassed wealth – through wool in Yorkshire, wine in Burgundy – and by the end of the twelfth century had lost their vitality.

The three organizational models we have sketched – the Benedictine, Cluniac, and Cistercian – are a yardstick for measuring the nature of inter-wat relations in Thailand by the method of contrast. The Thai monasteries have an entirely different founding history. Established by kings, by princes and nobles and then converted to royal wat by presenting them to the king, or as the wat of commoners founded by the lay collectivities in villages and towns, the Thai monas-

teries are essentially independent and separate entities (somewhat like the early Benedictine cells, but for entirely different reasons). Although bound by the common rule of the *vinaya,* the monasteries of the Mahanikai order are a collection of more or less autonomous cells. The Thammayut sect, bound by stricter rules, shares some of the features of the Cistercian case, especially the fact that some pupils of Mongkut founded their own houses in turn, and especially in Wachirayan's time – his seat was at Wat Bowonniwet – the monasteries acknowledged his headship and were under his direction. But the Thammayut wat of today, though more tightly held than their Mahanikai counterparts, scarcely approach that overall supervision manifested by the Cistercian order implied by annual congregations, the right of visitation of the head of the order, and so on. And many of the present Thammayut wat joined the sect, not as colonies and dependents, but from an initial status of independence. Moreover, if the impulse and energy for the founding and construction of monasteries in Europe came from the monks themselves, in Thailand it has always come more frequently from the lay patrons. There is also no numerical comparison at all between the spawning of dependent daughter houses in the European case and its rare occurrence in Thailand.

To understand the conspicuously different underlying basis of Thai monasteries we must look more closely at the fundaments of the Benedictine Rule, which like the *vinaya* for the Theravada monasteries, acted as the compass for Western monasticism. The three pillars of the Benedictine Rule are obedience, toil, and stability, none of which is stressed in the Theravada case. (The values of poverty and chastity are of course common to both.)

A Thai monk, though subject to the disciplinary authority of abbot of his wat and the sangha ecclesiastical officers, takes no vow of obedience or humility, which implies a renunciation of will. "It is a great matter," wrote Thomas à Kempis, "to live in obedience, to be under a superior and not to be at our own disposing. It is much safer to obey than to govern." The corollary of the Western argument that obedience and humility were necessary to life in a brotherhood was government by one head. While the Buddhist *Patimokkha* also emphasizes the amity of brotherhood, the doctrine of *anatta* is a dissolvent of self and individuality, not a doctrine of disciplining a will that exists as a reality.

The Thai monk also knows little or none of that attachment to the first monastery as implied by the vow of stability, which Benedict championed as a necessary adjunct to the achievement of an ordered settled community in the face of vagrancy and anarchy. The Thai monk, we have seen, freely moves from wat to wat in pursuit of his vocation, and the rules of admission to a wat community are scarcely stringent.

Lastly, the Benedictine Rule elevated toil, which signified a changed moral attitude to work: *Laborare est orare.* Labor was systematized as part of the regimen of monastic life and helped to make the monastery a self-sufficient economic unit (and later a wealthy corporation). The daily program ("the school of divine servitude") recommended six hours of manual toil and two hours of reading. In Christian thought toil, bodily exertion, was inextricably linked to the disciplining of the flesh and the quelling of its temptations, an association of ideas absent in the Buddhist orientation to self-discipline and extinguishing desire. Whereas the Christian monasteries strove to be economi-

cally self-reliant, directly managing their lands and endowments and keeping the political authority at bay from controlling or draining their wealth, the Theravada Buddhists have always been dependent on the laity for their material needs and, if they possessed lands or endowments, had to entrust their actual working or management to lay functionaries.

There is one last comparison pertaining to the ecclesiastical framework into which monasteries fit. In the Western Christian case, the ecclesiastical structure – the episcopate of the church – was different from and separate from the monasteries that indeed originally arose in opposition to the church. Though wary and critical of the bishops and the forces of the church, the monastic orders (e.g., the Cistercians and, later, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, etc.) allied themselves with the papacy, had a direct link with it, and served its international interests[2] as against the interests of national churches in the formation of which kings and bishops cooperated. Thus in this larger sense the monasteries became a part of the church, which was constituted as components in tension with one another.[3]

In Thai Buddhism there is no such church in that the counterpart of the episcopate – the ecclesiastical officials of all levels – have no lay parishes whose religious affairs and needs they oversee. Rather the *khana* divisions of the sangha refer to groupings of monks on a sectarian or regional or residential basis, and the ecclesiastical officials oversee the affairs of the *bhikkhus* in their charge, not the laity. Thus raised on entirely different foundations, the Buddhist "episcopate" is recruited from the *bhikkhu* inmates of the monasteries themselves and is usually a creature of the political authority. Thus the Buddhist ecclesiastical hierarchy allies with the king and is part and parcel of a national religion.

Western monasticism generated three paradoxes in its course. The first was that because the renunciant could not remain a law unto himself or shape his salvation by himself, the transition was made from monachism to cenobitism (or monasticism). Thus we have the paradox of the saint fleeing the haunts of men only to found monasteries in which the monks live according to the Rule.

The second paradox is that the glorification and systematization of toil led to the accumulation of wealth. The transition was time and again made from poverty to the control of wealth. "The brotherhood of toiling renunciants, flee as they might, could not escape the pursuing curse of wealth" (Workman 1927, p. 223).

The third paradox we have dealt with: The sturdy desire to be independent of the bishops and the established church led to enthusiastic and royal binding to the authority and interests of the papacy.

Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia shares if at all only in the first paradox. The second paradox of wealth, if actually possessed, is historically a product of patronage of kings and nobles and today of wealthy lay patrons – but this wealth is not on the scale of the Christian counterparts and was only indirectly

[2] The monks were also organizers of international pilgrimages; for instance, the monks of Cluny organized the pilgrimages to the great shrine of Santiago de Com postela and made the route to it one of the great pilgrim routes.

[3] In the struggle of Rome with nationalism whether in church or state, the monk was from the first the ally of the papacy. The great colonizing and missionary enterprises of the Benedictine and later Cluniac and Cistercian monks, and the great propagators of religion such as St. Boniface, enjoyed the support and encouragement of the popes. Thus Pope Gregory the Great championed Benedictine expansion.

managed by Buddhist monasteries as income receivers and *rentiers* rather than directly as entrepreneurs. The third is not relevant at all. But Theravada Buddhism in its turn generated its own paradoxes, which will be enumerated in the last chapter, and the chief of them all is that a sangha oriented to the salvation quest must periodically be regulated and purified by its chief protector and patron, the political authority.

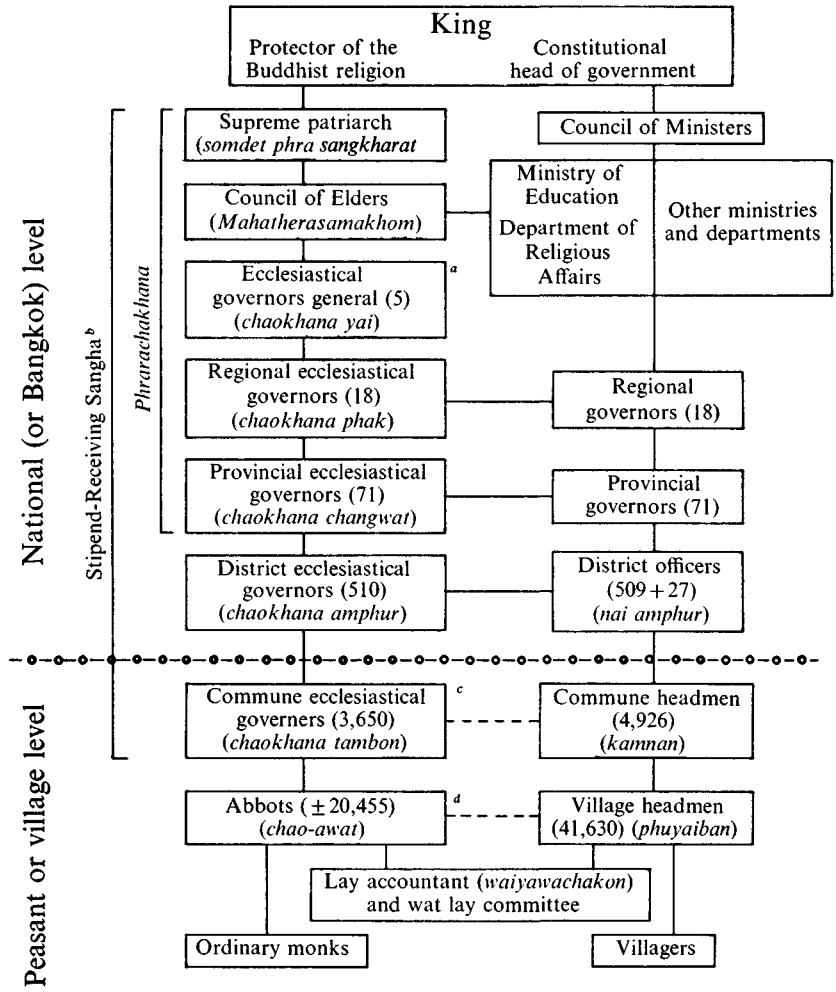
16. Patronage of the Sangha and the Legitimation of the Polity

The Formal Hierarchy of Offices

Mulder (1969) has provided a useful chart indicating the hierarchical structure of the sangha and how it relates to the governmental system (and at the base to the village population). We may conveniently use it (Figure 16.1) as our point of departure.

At first sight it becomes obvious how the sangha hierarchy is directly modeled on the civil administration (even though the upper echelons of the organizational structure were radically changed in 1963). Today the supreme patriarch parallels the prime minister, and the Council of Elders the Council of Ministers; and again the territorial administrative divisions of the sangha and the polity (according to region, province, district, and village) closely parallel each other. It is also remarkable how the number of lay and religious officials at regional, provincial, district, and commune levels are closely matched, the symmetry disappearing only at the lowest level of wat and hamlet/village (*muban*). On account of these formal similarities we might be seduced into thinking that there is a dual pattern of ecclesiastical and secular authority in Thailand, each being supreme in its own domain, both finally converging at the apex under the umbrella of the king, who is both head of government and protector of Buddhism. This impression is only partially true, because this formal patterning does not reveal the political reality behind it, a reality that signifies asymmetry rather than equality. Nevertheless, the formal patterning of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is important, and its numerous ecclesiastical offices are for many monks highly desirable goals of achievement. All ecclesiastical offices from a district head upward carry stipends (*nittayaphat*); there are conspicuous regalia of office that are given on investiture to sangha office, such as ornamental fans and lacquered bowls and boxes; even more importantly perhaps, monks who reach a particular titular grade and/or hold ecclesiastical office can appoint a certain number of monks as personal assistants, who too have titles (such as *phrakhru palad, phra baidika,* etc.) and who comprise their personal retinue.

Now titles (such as *phra maha, phra khru* and *phra rachakhana*) may also be given monks for their scholastic learning, especially in Pali. Some titles thus can be held independently of ecclesiastical administrative posi-



——— Official consultations take place.

- - - - - Unofficial consultations may take place.

-o—o- The line that separates the national from the village level has been drawn at the point where the lowest official civil service level reaches the village sphere.

Figure 16.1. Structure of the sangha and relationships to government and village populations* (1969)**.

Source: J. A. Niels Mulder, *Monks, Merit and Motivation*, Special Report Series No. 1, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, DeKalb, Ill.: North Illinois University, 1969. (I have changed the spelling of some terms and included some additions – S. J. T.)

* This chart is taken from information found opposite page 84 of *Raajngaam Kaansaasanaa Pracampii* 2506 (Bangkok: Kromkaansaasanaa Krasuang Syksaathikaan, 1965); also from *Administration of the Government of Thailand*, 2nd ed. (Bangkok: Public Administration Division, USOM/Thailand, August 1964).

** In late 1971 a revolution dissolved the existing constitution and a National Executive Council replaced the Council of Ministers.

Table 16.1.

Rank of official	Number 1967	1969
Ecclesiastical regional head	21	22
Ecclesiastical provincial head	107	110
Ecclesiastical district head	574	646
Ecclesiastical commune head	3,187	3,614
Total	3,889	4,392

tion and can also carry stipends and insignia of rank (especially if the highest *parian* grade 9 has been reached). But, inevitably, monks with scholastic achievement to their credit are invariably recruited to administrative office. Especially the higher the ecclesiastical office the more important it becomes that the holder have some scholastic achievement to his credit.

Table 16.1 shows the number of offices from regional ecclesiastical governor downward that existed in 1967 and 1969.[1] The total number of abbots in the country in 1967 was said to be 24,634, and for 1969, 25,292.

[1] From *Annual Reports of Religious Activities*, 1967, 1969. There are some discrepancies in numbers as cited in our source report of 1969 and the figures cited by Mulder for 1969.

Figure 16.1 (*cont.*)

[a] Ecclesiastical governors general are mentioned in the Act on the Administration of the Sangha of 1902 only. In the superseding acts of 1941 and 1963 they are not mentioned. Yet the institution appears to be continued in the administration of the sangha, as is clear from the Annual Report of Religion Activities for 1963 (opposite pp. 84, 103). The functions of the governors general are both regional and sangha-chapter specific: four governors general for the Mahanikai, or the Great Chapter, respectively in the north, the east, the center, and the south, and one for the Thammayut chapter in the whole country.

[b] Stipend-receiving sangha: Depending on rank and duties assigned to them, some abbots and ordinary monks may also receive stipends.

[c] At the commune (*tambon*) and village (*muban*) levels, secular administrative units and ecclesiastical parishes do not coincide. One wat often serves several administrative villages or parts thereof, while it is also possible that one administrative village contains several wat.

For all practical purposes there is no difference between a commune wat and a village wat other than the rank and certain duties of the abbot. There is no functional difference, in their relationships with parishioners, between a commune and a village abbot.

[d] The estimated total number of abbots is based on the number of operational temples (the total number of temples minus the 3,650 communal wat). The estimated figure of 20,455 is too high, however, since many village wat are run by deputy abbots. This occurs in all those cases in which nobody can be found who has the qualifications to become abbot or when the wat is temporarily deserted. I have no basis to estimate how often this is the case, but it is by no means a rare phenomenon.

Table 16.2, gives us some impression of the number of titled monks in their order of ranked precedence for the same years:

Table 16.2.

	1967	1969
Somdet phra sangkharat (supreme patriarch)	1	1
Somdet phra rachakhana	4	4
Phra rachakhana raung somdet	7	7
Phra rachakhana, level 1 (*chan tham*)	24	25
Phra rachakhana, level 2 (*chan tep*)	45	41
Phra rachakhana, level 3 (*chan rad*)	105	102
Phra rachakhana, level 4 (*chan saman*)	288	276
Phra khru sanyabat	2,559	2,813
Total	3,033	3,269

The four *somdet phra rachakhana* are automatically members of the Supreme Council of Elders (*Mahatherasamakhom*), which is presided over by the supreme patriarch.

We have remarked that one of the most important privileges that go with the holding of title and/or official administrative position is the right to appoint certain subordinate monks (usually chosen from the holder's wat of residence) to certain positions. Every monk who holds an official appointment, from supreme patriarch downward through regional and provincial heads to commune (*tambon*) heads, has the right to appoint his personal secretary (*lekha*). Moreover, according to title or position, he can confer on a varying number of monks the title of *phrakhru tana,*[2] who are allotted various tasks in the wat and are further differentiated as *phrakhru palat, phrakhru baidika,* and so on. For example, the supreme patriarch can appoint 15 *phrakhru tana,* the *somdet phra rachakhana* 10, the *raung somdet* 8, and each of the four levels of *phra rachakhana* 6, 5, 4, 3, respectively. This privilege usually stops with the *phra rachakhana* rank, the holders of which are usually referred to as *chao khun* (my lord). The lower-ranked *phrakhru sanyabat* enjoys the privilege of appointing three *phrakhru tana* only if he also holds the position of district ecclesiastical head; certain highly ranked abbots (e.g., *chaowat phraramluang chan ek*) are also given the right to appoint a similar number of assistants.

In my discussion of the implications of the Sangha Act of 1902 implemented by King Chulalongkorn (Chapter 6), I made special mention of this privilege granted ecclesiastical officials of appointing various personal assistants. Though the subsequent acts of 1941 and 1963 do not mention these privileges, they have in fact continued and expanded over time,

[2] This title is not to be confused with the superior title of *phrakhru sanyabat.*

keeping pace with the elaboration of the sangha's administrative activities. To appreciate fully the contemporary importance of this kind of patronage that allows for the creation of personal retinues, one must refer to the traditional political structure whose values have permeated the ecclesiastical system as well. Rabibhadana (1969) highlights an aspect of the stratified political system of the early Bangkok period that is replicated in the sangha of today with all the ceremonial frills but without the power associated with the orginal system:

> Control of manpower was symbolised and made obvious by the number of *samian thanai* (personal aides and secretaries) one was allowed to possess. Thus a Royal Decree of 1810 laid down that an official of the *sakdina* [grade] 400–800 was allowed to mark only three of his *phrai* [serfs] as *samian thanai*, an official of the *sakdina* 1,000–1,600 was allowed six *samian thanai*, an official of the *sakdina* 2,500–3,000 was allowed nine *samian thanai*. . . .

Something of the flavor of this feudal patronage and control over persons can be sensed today when one witnesses the titled dignitary-monks of Bangkok surrounded by their solicitous retinue of lesser monks on all religious festivals and ceremonies of state.

Concentration of Offices and Titled Monks in Bangkok

The capital, Bangkok-Thonburi, figures importantly as the physical location where the titled monks and the superior ecclesiastical officers are concentrated. Thus, in a real sense, fame and power are won and lost by monks in the capital rather than elsewhere. In this sense, too, there is a close parallel with the locus of political and military power in the society, which, too, is highly concentrated in the capital.

As far as ecclesiastical office is concerned, one can judge this concentration by the fact that for the year 1971, of the country's total of 296 abbots of *phra rachakhana* rank, 86 (34%) were concentrated in region 1, dominated by the capital. The supreme patriarch, as well as virtually all the members of the Supreme Council of Elders (*Mahatherasamakhom*), were of course resident in the capital, themselves abbots of famous wat; thus, for instance, in 1971 all 13 members of the council were abbots of royal wat (*wat luang*), and 12 of them had their temple seats in Bangkok-Thonburi. The last member's wat was in region 1 (just outside the capital in Samudsongkhran). Furthermore, with a few exceptions, the top heads of the territorial divisions, such as the *chaokhana phak* and *yai* (governors of regions and their superiors, the governors general) similarly have their seats in the capital. It is the provincial heads and their subordinates who reside within their administrative domains.

Another indication that the capital is the center of gravity is the location of the royal wat, to which are allocated the most important ecclesiastical titles. The annual report of the Department of Religious Affairs shows

that of a total of 161 royal temples throughout the country 78 (48%) were located in 1971 in Bangkok-Thonburi.

The Reality Behind the Formal Structure

Although in the matter of titles and hierarchical arrangement the sangha "imitates" the civil administration, these two are by no means equal partners in a political sense. The asymmetrical relationship can be best appreciated by this fact alone: The affairs of the sangha are formally under the supervision of the secular minister of education, whose important supervisory role we have discussed in Chapter 12 in relation to the Sangha Acts of 1941 and 1963 and who, acting on behalf of the secular government, can make the sangha feel the weight of that authority. Moreover, how small the place of the sangha is in the entire spectrum of governmental activities and in the total machinery of state can be gauged by the fact that its financing and servicing are done by one department within the Ministry of Education, which in terms of size of personnel and budget is inferior to certain other departments (e.g., Secondary Education, Teacher Training) in the same ministry.

The same asymmetry is manifest all down the line. While the civil provincial governors, district officers (*nai amphur*), and so on, have their elaborate staffs housed in imposing administrative headquarters in provincial capitals and district towns, the ecclesiastical governors have no comparable offices housed either in the same buildings of the civil authorities or in separate quarters. Indeed, the ecclesiastical governors of all ranks govern from their monasteries; and by way of staff they have usually a single all-purpose secretary and the retinue of personal assistants they are allowed to appoint. The heaviest administrative work of the sangha is not done by its monk-officials but by the civil servants of the Department of Religious Affairs, who transmit the decisions taken by the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council to the lower echelons, pay stipends, manage the collective sangha funds, and so on. It is now time to review the activities of this department and to see what kind of liaison it provides between the sangha and the state.

The Role of the Department of Religious Affairs

In 1960 Wells wrote:

> Close cooperation between the Buddhist Monastic Order and the Thai Government is effected by means of the Department of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Education. In 1959 this Department had a staff of about two hundred and a budget of 13,451,543 baht. The government recognizes four Buddhist festivals as national holidays. Senior members of the Monastic Order take part in nearly all state ceremonies and observances. In turn the government protects the lands and revenues of the Order, gives financial support to the maintenance

of temples, grants concessions to monks travelling on the State Railway, promotes monastic education, and fosters Buddhist teaching in schools and by radio programs (p. 2).

This is, in some ways, an idealized account of the relationship between the state and the sangha as mediated by the Department of Religious Affairs.[3] We shall in the next few pages give a formal account of the various activities of the department, taking the years 1967 and 1971 as our main points of reference. By this latter year the budget had, in comparison with 1959, increased by some 12 million baht, but the main pattern of the department's activities seemed to have remained the same, except for the *thammathud* (missionary work) program.

The Department of Religious Affairs, headed by a director general, was divided in 1971 into some seven divisions, which I shall now list, giving their main administrative duties.

The Office of the Secretary

This is the office of the director general, overseeing and coordinating the work of all the activities within the department and between this department and others in the Ministry of Education. It keeps records of all the temples and religious personnel in the country, and deals with non-Buddhist religious organizations abroad.

The Secretariat of the Sangha Supreme Council

This division is of particular interest to this study because it implements the policies and decisions of the council and acts as a channel of communication for the sangha between its various levels and units throughout the country. However, the Secretariat – indeed, the entire Department of Religious Affairs – has no separate offices or its own representatives situated in the provinces. The chief provincial educational officer and his staff act as the agents of the department.

The chief of the Secretariat gave me an account of the work done by his office in these terms:

> The Director General of the Department has two roles; he acts as the head of the department which is a unit in the Ministry of Education; he also acts as the Secretary General to the Council of Elders and has responsibilities towards that religious body.

[3] For example, one cannot take at face value the assertion that the government "protects the lands and revenues of the Order" in the light of allegations that the department's officials are not always scrupulous about the monies entrusted to them or the protection of the property interests of the sangha. See, for instance, *The Bangkok Post*, November 9, 1971, for a news item regarding an official inquiry into alleged corruption by some officials in the department. This issue came to a head during the course of my fieldwork in 1971, and some remedial action seemed imminent.

The Secretariat acts as the link between Government and the Council of Elders (*Mahatherasamakhom*). The meetings of the Council are attended by the Director General and myself. I act as the secretary and provide all the "services" for the meetings which are held in Wat Bowonniwet [the chief wat of the Thammayut sect]. The Supreme Patriarch decides where the meetings shall be held; the previous patriarch who was of the Mahanikai Sect held the meetings in Wat Sraket, which was his own *wat*.

The decisions of the Council are taken by majority vote, with the President (the Supreme Patriarch) having a casting vote. [The decisions are set down in writing as *Kot Mahatherasamkhom* (Laws of the Council of Elders)].

The decisions of the Council are communicated to the various ecclesiastical governors (the Ecclesiastical Governors-General, and the Regional and Provincial Governors). And if there are meetings that have to be held by ecclesiastical officials in the provinces, then the Secretariat will provide the facilities and the finance (for travel, lodgings and food) for holding these meetings.

But the various provincial governors can organize their own meetings to conduct their affairs whenever they see fit, just as a [secular] Governor of a Province can and does hold meetings with his district officers. But these meetings are not usually financed by the Secretariat. The territorial ecclesiastical governors have their own offices in their *wat* and they can and do freely communicate directly between themselves without the Secretariat having to be their intermediary. However, when these officials want to communicate with the Government on important matters they use the offices of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat also has a dhamma and Pali education section, which concerns itself with the provision of facilities and finance for holding the ecclesiastical examinations awarding the three *naktham* grades and the nine Pali *parian* grades. The examinations are organized and held by the monks themselves in the following manner.

The Council of Elders appoints two of its educated eminent monks to the positions of *maekong tham sanam luang* and *maekong pali sanam luang* to oversee the holding of the dhamma (*tham*) and Pali examinations respectively. Each head is assisted by an organization, called *phanaeg tham sanam luang* and *phanaeg Pali sanam luang*, respectively.[4]

According to information provided by the Secretariat in 1971, the head of the *naktham* section had seven assistants, two secretaries, and four assistant secretaries to help him administer the examinations. All these personnel were monks, and all of them were recruited from the capital's monasteries. Similarly, the head of the Pali section had two deputies, one secretary, and four assistant secretaries – once again, all these monks residing in the capital.[5] These scholar-monks came from a number of famous

[4] *Maekong* = literally, "company commander"; *phanaeg* = section; *sanam* = place; *luang* = great.

[5] The head of the *thamma* section was Phra Prommuni of Wat Ratchapathikaram; his assistants came from Wat Suthat, Wat Pichaya, Wat Yannawa, Wat Bowonniwet, Wat Suvannaram, Wat Rajathiwas, Wat Kruawan; the two secretaries were from the head's own wat. Of the four assistant secretaries, two were from the head's own wat and the remaining two from Wat Suthat and Wat Kruawan.

wat and from both sects, with the understandable feature that some of the secretaries and the assistants tended to be drawn from the wat of the heads because they comprised their workhorses and personal retinue.

While the syllabuses are set, the standards watched over, and the examinations administered and graded by the ecclesiastics, the actual provision of materials and finance for holding the examinations is made by the Secretariat, which also keeps records of the results, issues *naktham* and *parian* certificates to the successful candidates, and provides information, whenever requested, about the educational qualifications of individual monks.[6] It can be said that, by virtue of this servicing and documentation function, the department, then, as an arm of the government, is in a position to exercise supervision over and keep a check on the sangha's educational standards and achievements.

Ecclesiastical Education Division

But the actual linkage with the sangha's educational institutions and activities is provided by another division of the department – the education division. This division is in charge of promoting and improving ecclesiastical education, publishing religious textbooks and periodicals, establishing libraries, and revising syllabuses. The annual report for 1967 states that the department disbursed 1 million baht to religious institutions in support of their educational activities; this sum excludes the funds given the two Buddhist universities, which received 300,000 baht from the government's budget bureau and another 430,000 baht from the revenue of the sangha's central *sasana* property managed by the Department of Religious Affairs.

Since in other chapters we have discussed the kinds of ecclesiastical educational institutions that exist, we need not describe them here. Overall, we should note that the subsidies provided are only a small part of the expenses that are met by the wat themselves from their own revenue and funds. Probably, apart from supporting finance for the running of monastic schools, a major form of departmental aid is the provision of textbooks and educational materials. The largest single subsidy given is that to the two monks' universities. The sums are conspicuously small even when we take into account that the teachers and administrators are not paid salaries comparable to those of their secular counterparts.

The head of the Pali section was Phra Thampunyabordi of Wat Samphraya; his two deputies came from Wat Benchamabopit and Wat Thepsirin; his secretary from Wat Benchamabopit; of the four assistants to the secretary two were from his own wat and two from Wat Benchamabopit.

[6] According to the *Annual Report of Religious Activities* for 1967, the *naktham* examinations were held in 897 locations, the total number of candidates being 17,700; the *parian* examinations were held in 56 locations, the total number of candidates being 8,115 and the successful numbering 1,650. The total cost of holding the exams was 140,000 baht for the *naktham* and 180,000 baht for the Pali. These include fares and living expenses incurred by the examiners.

The Ecclesiastical Property Division

In Chapter 6 we discussed the two main kinds of monastic property – that which is owned and managed by the wat itself or whose revenue accrues to the wat and that which is labeled the central *sasana* property, which belongs to the sangha as a whole and which is managed on its behalf by the Department of Religious Affairs. (This property includes abandoned wat and their lands.)

The ecclesiastical property division of the department is entrusted with the management of this latter property and its revenue. I am unable to give any figures on the capital value of the property and the annual revenue that accrues from it. One understands that there is a Central Religious Estate budget prepared by the department for the use of this revenue for promoting Buddhism and supporting the sangha. One important expenditure from this budget is, as we have already observed, the subsidy given the two monks' universities to supplement that provided by the state. In 1967 the state provided 300,000 baht and the Central Religious Estate 430,000 baht for the universities; in 1971 the sums contributed were 1.4 million by the state (600,000 to Mahamakut and 800,000 to Mahachulalongkorn universities) and 200,000 by the Ecclesiastical Supreme Council from the Central Religious Estate.

It also appears that Central Religious Estate funds provided capital for the founding of a printing house in 1940 for the purpose of printing both departmental documents and religious literature.

Religious Services Division

This division is entrusted with important servicing functions that concern paying stipends to ranking ecclesiastics, appointing and promoting monks to, or removing them from, various ecclesiastical positions, granting permission for building and demolishing wat, arranging royal and state religious ceremonies, the most important of which is the presentations to royal temples by the king or his representatives at the *kathin* festival held at the end of Lent. The division also manages or helps with the staging of public merit-making drives on behalf of temples and also deals with religious organizations and associations.

The activities of this bureaucratic division are of vital importance when we consider them from the point of view of the manner in which the state principally supports the sangha and its ecclesiastical hierarchy, not only by conferring prestigious titles and offices and rewarding their holders materially but also by sponsoring and using to its own political advantage the ceremonials and festivals of Buddhism.

The stipendiary payments to religious office-holders, holders of high academic degrees, and monks who perform rites on behalf of king and state constitute one of the largest items in the budget of the Department of

Religious Affairs. For instance, in 1967, of the 25,835,100 baht that constituted the department's budget from *state* funds, 4,910,170 baht (19%) was disbursed in the form of stipends to these monks, and another 100,000 baht was spent on providing free travel to holders of ecclesiastical posts. It is noteworthy that 20 percent of the stipends was paid to monks in region 1 (i.e., the four provinces of Bangkok, Thonburi, Nondhaburi, and Samudprakorn, among which the dominant entity is the capital city itself) and the remainder to the remaining 67 provinces and to monks overseas in Malaysia.

The ceremonial support of Buddhism by the state is conspicuous in Thailand, as can be attested by those who have attended state occasions, national holiday celebrations, and calendrical Buddhist festivities. It is reported that in 1967 the state's participation in the colorful *kathin* ceremony of giving robes to some 145 royal wat either by the king or by his accredited representatives cost the Department of Religious Affairs 141,500 baht. Another indication of the catering to the highly visible trappings of office is the expenditure in the same year of some 300,000 baht on ornamental fans, the chief symbol of rank (150 fans being presented to titled office-holding monks and 250 going to scholar-monks and novices for their learning). This sum of money is equivalent to the financial grant-in-aid given by the state to the two ecclesiastical universities.

A final comment should be made on the implications of the work of this division concerning the appointment of monks to positions and the maintenance of discipline among the members of the sangha. It is, of course, the Council of Elders (with the assistance of, or by means of delegation of authority to, the various layers of the regional administration) that makes decisions relating to the appointment of titled monks (*phra samanasak, phra sankhathigan,* etc.), of monks invested with the authority to ordain monks and novices (*phra upacha*), of abbots to royal wat throughout the country. At present, it is also the council that in theory scrutinizes the applications of individual wat for staging fund-raising drives. The council also attempts to ensure that the finances of individual wat are kept in order by requiring that a register of the lay accountants of temple funds (*waiyawachakon*) be maintained.

But insofar as it is the Department of Religious Affairs that actually provides the bureaucratic machinery for documenting and transmitting the decisions of the council and maintaining sangha records, the government itself has thereby possession of some knowledge and means for maintaining surveillance (and when necessary for making its influence felt) over the activities and over the internal organization of individual wat.

Moral Education Division

This division is said to cooperate with other institutions in the propagation of Buddhism and the inculcation of moral and spiritual values among the

public. One of its major tasks is the provision of chaplains to the armed forces, virtually all of them being recruited from the ranks of educated ex-monks. Here, then, is a direct link between the department and the armed forces.

Religious Development Division

There appear to be three main activities entrusted to this division:

1. The completion and restoration of monasteries (as well as their demolition in order to build anew);
2. The active sponsoring of the missionary monk (*thammathud*) program whereby monks participate in the program of national and community development;
3. The propagation of Buddhism among the youth, which includes the sponsoring of organizations such as the Young Buddhist Association, Buddhist social centers, and Sunday schools for university and teachers' college students in the capital, and of various radio and television programs.

It is not necessary to dwell at any length on the last activity, except to say that its locus is the metropolis, where certain wat are used as the centers for youth work, and that it is certain monks famous for their scholarship or skill in meditation or eloquence in preaching who are called upon to broadcast to the nation.

The second activity listed – the *thammathud* program – whereby monks participate in what is essentially an activistic political program – will be the subject matter of a later chapter.

It remains, therefore, to comment on the first activity, that of rendering financial aid in order to complete unfinished temples and to restore old dilapidated buildings, and so on. According to figures reported in the 1967 annual report, the largest proportion of the budget (31%, or approximately 8 million baht) was in one way or another spent on the building and restoring of temples. (Significantly, it is reported that 1 million baht was spent in the northeast border areas, which are recognized as a politically sensitive region.)

We may conclude this section with an overall view of the priorities in the activities of the Department of Religious Affairs, as judged by its budgetary expenditure. It, perhaps, should not come as a surprise that the largest portion of the budget for 1967 (which is not significantly different from any other recent year) should have been spent by the government on what ordinary Buddhist laymen would consider the most meritorious religious act – namely, the building or restoring of wat. Thailand is a country that is already well endowed with temples, nevertheless, a country in which no self-respecting community or hamlet can long remain without possessing and displaying its own temple.

We then note that the next largest items of expenditure relate to the business of maintaining an ecclesiastical hierarchy and its prestige and

activities – the expenses range from stipends and free travel to ceremonial fans and personal retinue, and to the support of the ritual and festivals of the sangha, because the state and king are obliged to play their historical roles of supreme patron and merit maker by virtue of being the supreme wielder of authority and power. A necessary corollary of the sponsorship of these activities by the state is the domestication of the sangha politically to a certain degree.

The support of the education and learning of the sangha ranks only below these other channels of expenditure, partly because the individual wat themselves expend a substantial amount of their own resources on the education of their novices and monks, partly because the government is not too eager to sponsor and quench the thirst of contemporary monks for modern secular knowledge, for fear that doing so would undermine the sangha itself by accentuating the propensity of the educated religious to disrobe. Nevertheless, apart from the expenditure on holding religious examinations, the government is becoming increasingly aware of the need to support the ecclesiastical universities, adult schools, and more broad-based, with respect to curriculum, monastic schools.

But, as far as the 1967 expenditure is concerned, the government's expenditure on monastic education was probably no more than the expenditure on the salaries and wages of the officials and lay employees of the department (about 1.8 million baht, or 7% of the budget from state funds). It is also a comment on the dominance of Buddhism in Thailand that the total subsidies paid out by the department to other religions was a miniscule amount of only 190,000 baht (or less than 0.01% of the budget), the largest share going to Islam (120,000)![7]

These general categories of budgetary expenditure made by the department in 1967 in the order of priority described seem to have been fairly consistently followed in the previous decade as well. Wells (1960, p. 31) reports the department's budget "for support of religions" (Table 16.3) and "for support of monks and novices" (Table 16.4) for the years 1950 and 1958 thus:

Although between 1950 and 1959 the budget increased by about 12 million baht, it is clear that the main categories of expenditure for the two years are similar, but for "exceptional" nonrepetitive expenditure and the grants to the religious universities, which began in 1958, the year of their attaining university status. Temple repairs and construction, stipends to titled and scholar-monks, and ceremonial expenditure (*kathin* gifts, fans signifying rank) are conspicuous items, in a manner similar to that portrayed by the 1967 figures cited already. The total budget for 1958, 27,023,000 baht, is larger than the state's contribution to the budget

[7] Except, of course, in 1956–1957, which was the Buddhist Jubilee Year 2500, when, as Wells reports, the total expenditure for "the support of religion" mainly in the form of erecting a new temple in Buddhagaya, India, and for festivities was increased by about 10 million baht.

Table 16.3. *Budget for support of religions*

	1950 (in thousands of baht)	1958 (in thousands of baht)
Temple repairs, reconstruction	3,000	9,000
Pali, dhamma schools	400	500
Buddhist associations	25	100
Buddhist universities (two)	–	400
Grant to Muslim organizations	30	495[a]
Grant to Christian organizations	10	45[b]
Total (21 baht = $1)	3,465	10,540[c]

Source: Educational Statistics, academic year 1958, pp. 273–274.
[a] For repairs, reconstruction, excluding the school for Muslims at Bang Sue, which is maintained by the government.
[b] For repairs, reconstruction, given to Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations.
[c] The total expenditure was 21,630,000 baht in 1957, the Buddhist Jubilee Year 2500. The sum of 4.2 million baht was allocated to erect a Thai temple at the shrine of Buddhagaya, India.

of 1967; but we are unable to say how much the 1967 budget was augmented by revenue from the Central Religious Estate.

Examining the minutiae of the Department of Religious Affairs's annual budgets should not make us forget what is perhaps the more important larger fact, namely, that the annual government contribution to the department represents only a miniscule part of the national budget and that individual monasteries (and the vast majority of their resident monks) depend for their daily sustenance, conduct of education, staging of ceremonies, construction and repair of wat buildings and many other

Table 16.4. *Budget for Support of Monks and Novices*

	1950 (in thousands of baht)	1958 (in thousands of baht)
Salaries	3,522	4,422[a]
Administration of sangha	8,323	10,988
Kathin ceremonies, gifts or robes	50	220
Fans for monks, to indicate rank	58	658
Preaching	25	40
International meetings		35
Grants to foreign students		120[b]
Total	11,968	16,483

[a] This covers the monthly allowances (*nittayaphat*) of monks of high rank or monks who have special administrative duties. In 1959 there were 6,570 such monks, and their allowances varied from 60 to 1,000 baht per month.
[b] A number of Buddhist monks from Cambodia and Laos were given an opportunity to study at the Buddhist universities in Bangkok.

activities that together make up the totality of Buddhism as a religion of the Thai people, on finance and material gifts deriving not from the government but from their own individually administered property and from their lay patrons and supporters. We cannot go into the details of the economic basis of Thai monasteries in this book.[8] But let me say in passing that most wat located in the capital and provincial towns derive rents from commercial buildings situated on the perimeters of their wat compounds and fees from turning their commodious compounds into car parks, apart from rents that they may receive from property located outside the wat that they own or whose income they receive (*thi thoranisong* and *thi kalapana*). The rise in urban real-estate values combined with rapid urban growth and development has placed in the hands of many wat situated in highly advantageous locations a flow of income with which they can finance their own educational and building activities. One may also mention in this context the remuneration many wat earn in an urban context by renting their *sala* (pavilions) and making the ritual services of monks available for the staging of elaborate and prolonged mortuary rites, not only by Thai Buddhists but by urban Chinese as well. Finally, I may mention, without elaborating, the gifts both in cash and kind that wat and their inmates receive during religious festivals, which are also fund-raising campaigns.

The Supreme Ecclesiastical Council (Mahatherasamakhom) *at Work*

The 1963 act sought to unify the sangha by concentrating power in the hands of the patriarch; in actual fact it led to the weakening of the independence of the sangha for two reasons. A patriarch chosen at this time as acceptable to the authoritarian Sarit regime inevitably, whatever his personal qualities, finds himself in a structurally dependent position with regard to that regime. Moreover, the *Mahatherasamakhom* that replaced the Assembly and the Council of Ministers was inevitably a less effective and representative organ than those it replaced.

First of all, the fact that all monks of *somdet phrarachakhana* status (five in number) were automatically members of the Supreme Council for life ensured that men of great age and somewhat feeble energies were called upon to steer the ecclesiastical ship. The remaining members of the council (at least 4, but not more than 18, chosen from monks of *phra rachakhana* status) were appointed by the patriarch for a term of two years, but this again did not ensure that he would choose the ablest monks to fill the position. In 1971 there were eight such appointed members.[9] (These appointments were, of course, countersigned by the minister of education.)

Moreover, whereas previously there were distinct ministerial posts with de-

[8] The economic basis of urban wat located in Bangkok-Thonburi will be a major topic in the volume that is planned as a sequel to this.

[9] The appropriate members are eligible for reappointment for further terms of office.

fined competencies and attached ministries, now after 1963 the *Mahatherasamakhom* has acted as an undifferentiated body that, in dealing with all matters at the same time, is in danger of doing none of them adequately. As one informant put it, "the *Mahatherasamakhom* is a Council of Ministers without portfolio."

Vigorous, impatient, and activistic monks do sometimes make scathing statements on the weakness and elderly membership of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council of Elders. Said one monk: "The Council is primarily concerned with giving permission to build *wat*, and with giving names to *wat* newly built." The council is often accused of being more interested in ceremonial matters than in the real business of the sangha, which is to study and teach. Said another monk: "The highest Sangha officials are out of touch with and ignorant of present day needs and conditions. The *Mahatherasamakhom* has no educational policy; it is only concerned with administration, and this boils down to giving permission to build new *wat*, passively approving the budget prepared by the Department of Religious Affairs, and so on."

Perhaps the manner in which the present council works will aid us in judging the character of its performance. The council meets for ordinary business every fortnight; it may hold extraordinary meetings when necessary. Typically, it tackles the business of special issues and tasks through the mechanism of appointing subcommittees, which consist of at least one member of the council acting as chairman and of monks from outside conversant with the issue who are invited to attend. As already described in a previous section on the method of holding ecclesiastical examinations, the council delegates educational matters to two monks who are appointed to take charge of monastic education – one is the *mekong bali*, who is in charge of Pali education and examinations, and the other is the *mekong tham*, who supervises the *naktham* studies. Note that both these officers and their establishments are concerned with the traditional systems of religious education and not with modern educational institutions. It is often alleged by young scholar-monks that the council is solely concerned with traditional Pali and dhamma studies and evinces no interest in the new forms of education being championed by them. They further allege that – although by a recent decree passed in May 1969 the two ecclesiastical universities are left free to chart their own course – these institutions suffer from the great disadvantage that the Council of Elders routinely allocates to them year in and year out the same amount of money (from the income deriving from the sangha's central religious property) without an informed assessment of the universities' current needs and achievements.

If these allegations are true – and I myself have no basis for proving them false – then it is clear that the Thai sangha is at present governed at its highest levels by somewhat ineffective and unrepresentative leaders, who also structurally find themselves in a weak position vis-à-vis the civil government. But this, of course, is not to say that the sangha is without initiative and strength at certain other points and levels of its organization.

The Administrative Activities of an Ecclesiastical Governor: A Case Illustration

In the entire ecclesiastical hierarchy relating to territorial administration – that is from governors general and regional governors, at the top, to the governor of the commune, at the bottom – it is probably the offices of provincial governor (*chaokhana changwat*) and, less importantly, of the district governor (*chaokhana amphut*) that are the most critical. These are the personages – in what amounts in some ways to a paper hierarchy that lacks real substance in the form of bureaucratic machinery – who are in a position to wield more or less authority, to enforce more or less discipline, more or less cooperation among autonomous wat and between the wat and civil authorities according to the manner in which the office-holder chooses to define and execute the duties and privileges of his office.

The structure of the sangha hierarchy is such that in Thailand the quality and the texture of the religious administration vary from province to province, and district to district, in large part as a function of the drive and propensity of individual governors and their subordinate henchmen.[10] At another level, the same is true of the performance of individual monasteries, which is closely linked with the character and drive of the abbot in charge and the assistants (*phuchuay*) he chooses and patronizes to help him administer.

The provincial governor occupies a nodal position with respect to the appointment of abbots to wat. There is a difference in the mode of appointment between ordinary wat (*wat raad*) and royal wat (*wat luang*). In the case of ordinary wat, when an abbotship falls vacant, the ecclesiastical heads of the commune and district in which the wat is located, having consulted the resident monks and novices of the wat and some laymen who are closely associated with it (particularly the lay members of the wat committee), propose a candidate to the provincial governor who makes the appointment. As regards a royal wat, the ecclesiastical governor himself proposes a candidate to the regional governor and thus upward to the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council, which makes the appointment.

A provincial governor's important linkmen are the district governors below him, who receive their directives from and send information to their governors, as well as the Department of Religious Affairs in Bangkok. Jane Bunnag in her study of monastic organization in Ayutthaya discusses the ways in which the *chaokhana amphoe* (ecclesiastical district head) "is a pivotal figure with regard to communication taking place between the civil administration and the Sangha" (p. 27):

1. He collects the reports of individual abbots in his district dealing with the number, status, age, academic achievements, and so on, of the resi-

[10] Jane Bunnag (1973, p. 94), dealing with the administrative performance of two ecclesiastical subdistrict heads (*chaokhana tambon*) in Ayutthaya province, suggests that there can be variability in the nature of their supervision of individual wat. She also addresses herself to the question of the factors that distinguish the role performance of "active" from "passive" abbots and their deputies (p. 69, passim).

dents in his wat – this information being collected soon after the onset of Lent – and tabulates this information before forwarding it through the education office in the *amphoe* office to the Department of Religious Affairs in Bangkok.

2. He plays an important part in filling ecclesiastical offices that fall vacant within his area of jurisdiction.

> Final appointments for positions below the level of Ecclesiastical District Head are granted by the Ecclesiastical Head of the Province . . . but it is impossible for an officer of this standing to have personal knowledge of all the *bhikkhus* in the province and he must rely upon the opinion of his subordinates at the district level by making these appointments (p. 27).

3. He is responsible for the local organization of the annual ecclesiastical examinations.

4. He is expected to see that Buddhist ceremonies held to mark national holidays are performed at the proper time and place.

A Case Study of the Activities of a Provincial Governor

I was privileged to receive information from, and to discuss matters with, an eminent provincial governor, his monk-secretary, his other monk-assistants, and his lay bursar. The governor was a most energetic administrator and was at the same time a scrupulously orthodox monk in regard to disciplinary observances. The main theme that underlies the facts that I shall report is that while this monk's chief preoccupation is to make the sangha pure and strong, the very activities directed to this objective also strengthen the sangha's link with the political authority.

The province under consideration is Thonburi, which contains the city of Thonburi as well. In 1969 the province had a total of 190 wat (40 of which were royal wat) with some 6331 monks (excluding 2053 temporary monks, or *navaga*) and 1864 novices; of the monks with ecclesiastical titles, there was one of *somdet* rank, 42 of *phra rachakhana* rank, and 127 of *phrakhru* rank; 50 monks were given the authority to ordain other monks (*upacha*); there were 783 monks classified as teachers in monastic schools and 1414 monks and novices who had passed one of the six *parian* grades.

The monk who was recently appointed to be ecclesiastical governor of the province is Phra Tepmeytee (promoted in 1971 to a still higher *rachakhana* rank and invested with the name of Phra Thammachedi), who is the abbot of Wat Thongnopakhun. This is a small wat of royal status. Under the tutelage of this abbot, it had a reputation for exemplary life led by its monks and novices, for its physical cleanliness and order, and its devoted dedication in past years to dhamma and Pali studies. As abbot, Phra Tepmeytee had put his house in order in two ways. His "internal" plan was that monks and novices should concentrate on religious studies, living strictly according to the *vinaya*, and perform *sanghakamma* correctly

according to prescription. An aspect of his orientation was to discourage the practice of astrology by monks and to show a lack of interest in the inculcation of meditation techniques. His active interest in education resulted in the building of a new school and library for the wat. He himself is a Pali scholar (who has passed *parian* grade 8) and has been the leading teacher in the school for several years. The abbot's "external" plan was to engage in extensive building and restoring activities (the most recent being the building of new residential quarters, or *khuti*), the restoration of the *bod* and *wihan*, the building of a metaled road from the main road to the wat) and to give meticulous attention to taking good care of the wat.

It is not surprising that in the Thai context such a forceful and energetic monk should also be authoritarian and paternalistic in outlook. Much of the management of wat property and finance is in his charge, and he is aided in this by a lay *waiyawachakon* (lay bursar), who is an able lawyer.

I shall describe the impact of this monk on provincial administration by describing: (1) the rules he formulated for the administrative council of the province, (2) the reforms he announced as having been introduced in an occasional publication, and (3) a meeting he organized to teach administrator-monks the procedures of correct investigation of monks and laymen for alleged infringement of sangha rules. One of the chief concerns of the abbot was to train administrator-monks, given the title of *phrasangkhathigan*, who would acquire the skills necessary for the financial management of the wat and its property and for the strict enforcement of discipline and order among the religious.

The Provincial Administrative Council. The ecclesiastical provincial governor was empowered by the laws passed by the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council to formulate a set of rules for the governance of Phra Tepmeytee's province. The following are some of the chief provisions he devised in 1971 to regulate the meetings and activities of the Thonburi Provincial Ecclesiastical Council.

1. The council will meet at the wat of residence of the provincial governor, who will act as its chairman; the provincial records will also be kept there.

2. The council will consist of three categories of members: (a) advisory members who are composed of the regional governor and his deputy and certain other monks to be chosen by the chairman; (b) ex-officio members who are composed of the ecclesiastical provincial governor and the district heads; (c) *appointed* members (a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 14) who are chosen by the provincial governor and one each by the district heads. The term of office for advisory and ex-officio members is for life or until disrobing or voluntary retirement, whereas that for appointed members is for four years with the possibility of reappointment.

3. The council (i.e., the ex-officio and appointed members) will be

divided into three committees: administrative committee, education committee, and welfare committee. Each of these will have a membership of five to seven monks and will meet at the wat of residence of the chairman of each committee. The chairman has a secretary. Each committee can, with the approval of the council, appoint subcommittees to consider particular issues.

4. The ex-officio members will execute the decisions of the council and report their actions to the council; they can appoint other monks as *phrasangkhathigan* to assist them in their duties (the identity of those chosen is reported later).

5. Three kinds of meetings will be held: (a) general meetings to be held twice a year, to be attended by all members; (b) special meetings called by the chairman of council; (c) meetings of the separate committees convened by the committee chairman. The quorum is two-thirds of the membership.

6. The general meeting of the council appoints the secretary and assistant secretary of the council, whose duties are to notify members of meetings, keep records, write minutes, and conduct all necessary correspondence.

I have reported these details of organization in order to convey the following points: Firstly, the council is so organized that power resides with the provincial and district heads and their nominees; secondly, the organization is devised as a hierarchy that is partly influenced by the system of civil administration but is also partly an extension and elaboration of the internal administrative structure of large wat. Although hierarchy is in this context an automatic consequence of administration, it is worth noting that the council is normally called upon to consider strictly monastic matters. Thus, for instance, the agenda of the general meeting held in July 1971 had these items, which reflect the ecclesiastical governor's interest in the correct demeanor and education of the religious:

1. Training of monks in techniques of investigation
2. The education of *navaga* (newly ordained temporary monks)
3. The deportment of monks and novices when they are outside their wat
4. Concerning the behavior of monks and novices on their daily food-collection rounds.

The Ecclesiastical Governor's Announcement. A publication in January 1970, besides containing other information, reported the activities and reforms carried out in religious matters in Thonburi.[11] This document was apparently widely distributed in the capital and is said to have enhanced the reputation of the governor. The journal explicitly stated that its purposes were to publicize the work done by the *khana song* of Thonburi

[11] The publication was entitled *Announcement by the Ecclesiastical Governor of Thonburi Province* (*Thalanggan Khana Changwad Thonburi*), Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1970.

province; to impart to ecclesiastical administrators (*chaokhana sangkhathigan*) information concerning administrative work so that they can at each level work in an orderly and cooperative fashion; to provide a forum for the expression of ideas and views that would help the *chaokhana sangkhathigan* to improve their administration.

One of the other classes of information provided by the publication concerned religious personnel and monasteries: a list of the members of the Council of Elders of the kingdom, a list of names of the ecclesiastical office-holders in the province of Thonburi, the names of individual wat and their abbots in the same province, and, finally, statistics concerning the number of wat and religious personnel in the province, the personnel being classified according to their title, educational qualifications, and so on. In the same class is to be included the announcement of the appointment of the *phrasangkhathigan*, who were entrusted with the task of assisting the ex-officio members of the provincial administrative council. The appointees, we are informed, were all district heads, the secretary of the provincial governor, the commune heads, the abbots of some 21 wat, and the deputy abbots of 4 wat.

While this kind of information is useful, I must comment on the frequency with which a plethora of religious publications repeat *redundant* lists of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and names of office-holders, a proclivity that is also manifest in the civil sphere. Editors never tire of printing these lists, and the office-holders, no doubt, derive great satisfaction from seeing their names in print. Thus, once again, whether or not there is real substance to these offices, the notion of a hierarchy of position, power, and prestige is a Thai preoccupation from which the sangha itself is not exempt, at least among those located in the metropolis and in provincial capitals.

A second class of information provided by the publication is as follows: elucidation of the laws concerning the management of religious property; a resolution passed by the Council of Elders concerning acting appointments; administrative decisions taken by the Thonburi provincial council concerning the delimitation of *tambon* areas for ecclesiastical purposes; rules proclaimed by the Thonburi council concerning the proper method of organizing the wat fair; and, finally, a recommendation concerning the proper qualifications and training of certain officiants who participate in the ordination ceremony. Some of these items are critical for the discipline and strength of the sangha and, therefore, merit further examination as to how the rules and norms were expounded. I shall report on three articles contained in the publication.

The article explaining the laws relating to the management of religious property made the following points. The abbot is responsible for the management of the religious property of a wat; according to regulation he must have a *waiyawachakon* (lay bursar/accountant) or an equivalent person to keep records, collect rents, and deal with the finances, and this

person must submit the accounts to the abbot for inspection at the end of each year and at whatever time the abbot requests. But where the properties of a wat are managed in part or in full by the Department of Religious Affairs, then the abbot is entitled to request the department to provide him with the records of property registration and accounts for examination. The article then proceeded to instruct its readers about the exact procedure for making application to the department.

The avowed purpose of this article was to instruct abbots in how to look after the property interests of their wat. Why the ecclesiastical governor of Thonburi felt it relevant to instruct abbots in this matter can be appreciated best in the context of allegations that both some abbots and some officials of the department have "mismanaged" the properties and the revenues entrusted to them. (I propose to deal with this question in another study, which will deal with the economic basis of urban wat. Let me briefly say here that the allegations mainly concern the leasing of parts of the monastic compounds to lay commercial interests or the building on compound land of structures for renting to commercial interests. What is feared is either that some officers of the Department of Religious Affairs are appropriating for their private use some of the proceeds of the property of the sangha entrusted to them or that some abbots are endangering the purity of the religion and the interests of their wat because of their avarice and interest in moneymaking. In this respect, it is relevant to report that *The Bangkok Post* (November 9, 1971) carried a news item, entitled "Inquiry Under Way into Officials," which reported:

> Two first-grade officials of the Department of Religious Affairs are being investigated . . . on corruption charges. . . . The investigation was ordered by Education Minister Sukich Nimmahaeminda over alleged irregularities in the construction of monks' living quarters in the compound of Wat Prathumkongka. . . .

A second article in the ecclesiastical governor's publication was concerned with ensuring that wat fairs are organized according to certain rules. It said that since the Council of Elders had so far made no rules on this matter, the ecclesiastical governor would himself make the rules for his province. It then informed abbots that they should conform to the rules stated before they make application to their district heads for permission to hold a fair, and the heads in turn must determine that all conditions are observed before they send the application to the governor.

Why this interest in wat fairs? A wat fair is devoted to fund raising; it also involves the invasion of the wat precincts by the world of entertainment and commerce. Religious devotional and merit-making activities necessarily entail dealings with traders and shopkeepers. Monks are involved in the organization of the fair and must work with laymen in the leasing of stalls, the collection of funds, and the keeping of accounts. While authorized laymen actually "handle" the money given by merit

makers, monks frequently participate in the business of counting and bookkeeping. Hence it is possible to see why the ecclesiastical governor is concerned with ensuring that monks are not unduly involved with the physical handling of money, on the one hand, and, on the other, with seeing to it that whatever funds are collected on behalf of the wat are properly accounted for.

The third article was addressed to the proper conduct of *sanghakamma*, in this case, the correct staging of the ordination ceremony. The particular point of concern was the selection and aptitude of the *kammawachachan* or *khusuat*, the two tutor-monks who instruct the ordinand and address the assembled monks under the leadership of the *upacha*, the presiding monk. The article declared that those who are chosen to officiate as *khusuat* must show a mastery of the *vinaya* rules, the chants and sacred words to be used in the ceremony, and its ritual details.

The article reported that the previous ecclesiastical governor of the province (Somdej Buchachan of Wat Anong), realizing how important the selection of *khusuat* was, had instructed the district heads to ensure that candidates for this office have the necessary qualifications before submitting their names to him for appointment. The article then reported the proper procedure for holding the ritual, and the Pali verses that the *khusuat* have to memorize, and commented on the confusions and irregularities that exist at present, as seen by the present governor.

The relevance of this article can be appreciated in light of the fact that a major concern of Theravada Buddhism is not so much the censorship of doctrine as the surveillance of the observance of *vinaya* rules and the correct holding of rituals, of which, perhaps, the most important is that of the ordination of monks and novices.

The Instruction in Investigation Methods and the Homage to the Ecclesiastical Governor. The ecclesiastical governor organized an instruction course for the abbots, deputy abbots, and secretaries from two districts within his jurisdiction, which had for its theme their instruction in the methods of investigation (*withi gaan sob suan*) and which lasted from August 31 to September 2, 1971.

The sessions, which were limited to the afternoons, took place in the hall of the monastic school and were presided over by the ecclesiastical governor of region 1, of which Thonburi province is a part. About 200 monks were present on the second day, when I attended. The theme of investigation was general in scope, and the object of the instruction course had to be pieced together from the proceedings.

One of the young administrator-monks of Wat Thongnopakhun, the governor's seat, explained the object of the course thus:

This meeting is about the methods of investigating offenses against *phravinai* (the *vinaya* code) and *khana song* (the sangha). Just as laymen have methods and institutions for investigation and adjudication, so should the monks. If lay-

men break laws, the police investigate; in the same way, if monks break the *vinai*, they should be investigated. But the problem is that the *vinai* does not lay down in detail the procedures for investigation. It is true that the *vinai* tabulates categories of offenses, such as Parajika, Sanghadidesa, and so on, but judicial procedures are inadequately treated. In the past, the investigations of monks' offenses by other monks have been unsatisfactory because the investigators did not observe proper procedures. Usually, the abbot of the offender's wat first investigated, but if the offense was heavy, then superior officials investigated in turn – first the district head, then the provincial governor, and so on.

Next the monk went on to eulogize the provincial governor, who is also his abbot, in these terms:

The abbot is a very busy and efficient man. Previously, he was primarily engaged in educational activities, but now as *chaokhana changwat* his main preoccupation is administration. He is famous and is admired by other members of the *khana song*. In his administrative work he is concerned with the quality of life and service of monks as well as with their "security."

On August 31, which was the most important day of the meeting, the major speaker was an able lawyer who also acted as lay bursar/accountant to the governor's wat. As a practicing lawyer, he was the chief instructor on investigation, and he had prepared a long document on the subject. The lawyer was preceded by the governor himself, who spoke on many matters, one of which stood out. He approached the topic of fake peripatetic pilgrimage-bound monks (*phra thudong*) who are not resident members of any wat but who pitch their "tents" on road sides and in public places, seeking publicity. While he spoke, he held up in ridicule a photograph of such a false monk. He then proceeded to introduce the subject of investigation.

The governor's raillery against false monks of the *phra thudong* variety has a topical relevance in present-day Thailand, apart from the sangha establishment's longstanding antagonism to them. Grounded in permanent monastic habitation, the sangha deplores the homeless wandering monk, not subject to authority and not a member of any fraternity of monks. Why the sangha and, more particularly, an energetic functionary should be concerned with investigation at this time in Thailand requires, in part at least, a political answer: the fact that political subversion can be effected by "enemies" of the state, by "Communist insurgents" and the like, by donning the monk's robe as a cover. This subterfuge was alleged to be occurring already in some parts of the north and northeast, where insurgent activity was said to be gathering strength.

But, as mentioned before, there are other pressing reasons for concern with investigation procedure – an important one being the need for monks to take proper care of their monastic properties and finances and not allow lay authorities or avaricious monks to swindle the sangha or bring it into disrepute. This theme was implicit in the long discourse given by

the lawyer. His discourse related to the document he had prepared for distribution, and this document dealt with topics of the following kind:

1. Who are the religious authorities who are entitled to investigate and adjudicate? The spheres of authority of the various levels of ecclesiastical office down to the level of the abbot of a wat and his deputy and *phuchuay* were spelled out.

2. What are the major principles of investigation?

The inquiry taking account of the time dimension: events before the crime, the crime itself, the events following it, and the consequences of the crime;

The circumstances that required the initiation of investigation (the nature of accusations, etc.);

The places where investigation is to be conducted;

The rules for examining the accuser, accused, and witnesses;

The relevant evidence and in what form evidence and pertinent information should be collected, recorded, and presented; the distinction between facts and points of law;

The methods of inference and passing judgment.

While this attempt at the legal instruction of administrator-monks interested me as an anthropologist, another feature of the proceedings fascinated me even more. Every abbot of a wat or his representative attending the meeting made a financial contribution on behalf of his wat ostensibly for the purpose of meeting the financial costs of running the meeting (costs incurred in hiring loudspeakers and chairs and serving soft drinks to the participants, etc.). The financial contributions made amounted to some 3785 baht (approximately $190) from 33 contributing wat. About 19 wat contributed 100 baht each, 6 gave 200 baht each, and one even 300 baht. Now these contributions were patently in excess of the costs of financing the meeting, and it was explained to me that the remainder would be used to finance other such meetings. This bears out the fact that, apart from the relatively meager financial aid received from the government for the conduct of ecclesiastical affairs, the sangha itself uses its own resources for its purposes.

But there are further ramifications to this business of contributions. Not only were some (three) monks from the governor's wat sitting at tables counting the money and meticulously recording the amounts, but also a novice wrote on a blackboard the names of the wat and the size of their contributions, so that all participants could see. This behavior is a replication of behavior that is familiar at grand merit-making festivities at wat and at rites of passage in lay homes – the public announcement, preferably over the loudspeaker, of the magnitude of the gift given by individual participants or guests.

But again there is more to this behavior. It seems to me that when subordinate abbots brought gifts of money to their superior ecclesiastical provincial governor, they were in some ways reproducing the behavior that is common in Thai civil society as a whole, both in the past monarchical

and contemporary phases, namely, the custom whereby inferiors and subordinates show loyalty, submission, and allegiance to their superiors and patrons by giving gifts and paying their obeisance on the latters' birthdays, anniversaries, and on New Year's Day. It is no exaggeration to suggest that, just as ministers of state and governors of provinces receive sumptuous gifts and gratifying gestures of allegiance from their directors general and their lesser bureaucrats, so the ecclesiastical governor receives the respects of his subordinates, but with this important difference – that the ecclesiastic will not use the money for his pirvate benefit but in order to finance his administrative expenses. The general moral of the story, however, stands: If you introduce hierarchy into the sangha, then you also thereby generate other behavior that is endemic to the wider political domain.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Phra Tepmeytee should have been rewarded for his labors on behalf of the sangha by being promoted in December 1971 to the next higher rank, taking the name of Phra Thammachedi. He went to the royal palace to receive the fan and certificate of office from the hands of the king. At the ceremony high ecclesiastics chanted *suat mon* on his behalf. Thereafter, many monks and laymen visited him in his wat to pay their respects, bringing with them gifts of flowers and packets of candles and incense sticks.

It must be clear to the reader that this venerable monk is not a careerist political monk in the pejorative sense. He is a strict monk whose objective is both to purify and strengthen the sangha – to see that monks live by the rule, that the rituals essential to monkhood are correctly performed, that the monasteries safeguard their economic interests. But in pursuing these objectives he also furthers the bureaucratization of the sangha, and he builds up a machinery that necessarily links up and stands in a relation of alliance with the political authority.

The Supreme Patriarch (Somdet Phra Sangkharat) *Lies in State*

What is implied when one says that the honors of state are showered on high ecclesiastics? I can illustrate with an extreme circumstance.

On December 18, 1971, the supreme patriarch of the sangha traveling "in his official yellow Mercedes-Benz with a highway patrol car flashing a red light in front" and followed by "another Mercedes carrying monks and officials of the Religious Affairs Department" met with a ghastly motor accident and was killed together with certain others.[12]

Somdej Phra Ariyawongsakatayan, the patriarch, was a commoner of peasant origin who had made the familiar passage from temple boy to novice to monk, his intellectual ability (he had passed the highest *parian* grade 9 at the age of 32 and wrote some textbooks), among other things, securing for him the abbotship of Wat Makutaksatriya, one of the chief Thammayut sect monasteries in the capital. At the time of death, at

12 *The Bangkok Post*, December 19, 1971.

age 74, he had spent 54 years as a monk. He was made supreme patriarch in 1965, when he was 68 years old, and his ascent to this high office was intimately linked with the decline and fall of Phra Pimolatham, the ex-abbot of Wat Mahathad, which we have mentioned in Chapter 12. Apart from his chairmanship of the Council of Elders and his membership in some committees, the supreme patriarch had heavy ceremonial duties, as may be gauged from the fact that for the month of December 1971 he had been scheduled to preside over 48 religious functions in eight provinces, the most important of these being the king's birthday rites, which he had attended on December 5.[13]

The patriarch's sudden death evoked the following honors of state. It was reported that "Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, Chairman of the National Executive Council, with tear-filled eyes, paid homage to the remains of the Patriarch at the Police Hospital."[14] Thereafter, the patriarch lay in state in Wat Bowonniwet, the chief wat of the Thammayut sect. The king and queen who were reported as "visiting villages and government forces in communist-infested areas of Nan Province"[15] (in the north) returned immediately to attend the bathing rites held in the afternoon of the day following the death.

The nation was directed to observe mourning for 15 days. All female government officials and employees were expected to wear black dress, all male officials and employees to wear black ties with white clothes. (As far as I could see, the vast majority of officials and civil servants in the capital conformed.) Flags were lowered to half mast. The patriarch would lie in state for 100 days so that the public could pay him its respects. At the end of this period he would be cremated in grand style in Wat Thepsirin, the place of cremation for royalty, princes, and aristocrats.

Let me report my observations, as recorded in my diary:

I was to discover when I went to view the lying in state that special royal favors were shown the patriarch because he had officiated as *khu suat* at the king's ordination into monkhood in 1956.

There is a special pavilion in Wat Bowonniwet called Thanak Pet where the body lay in state. It was encased in a richly gilded ornamental urn that was presented by the king himself (an honor conferred by the king on high officials of state). Although the patriarch as a commoner was entitled to an urn of grade-5 status (*chan ha*), the king in recognition of the special relation he had to the patriarch, conferred an urn of grade-4 status (*chan si*), which normally only princes of *phra ong chao* status (grandsons of kings/sons of minor queens) are entitled to. On the four corners surrounding the urn were standing four umbrellas, each constructed as a tier of five white umbrellas (a tier of seven or nine umbrellas is usually affixed over Buddha statues or over the royal throne). On either side of the base of the urn were laid out the insignia of the patriarchal office (*kryang prakob yot*) such as his fan, various lacquered bowls and boxes, and so on.

13 *The Nation*, December 19, 1971. 14 *The Bangkok Post*, December 19, 1971.
15 Ibid.

I arrived around 9 A.M. The pavilion and its corridors were filled with monks; and a host of immaculately white-uniformed bemedaled officers from the Department of Religious Affairs and the royal household, all wearing black arm bands, were on duty directing the public and seeing to the proper conduct of the ceremony. Four monks seated at the back of the hall were chanting *suat parit* (*paritta* verses) while a thin stream of laymen, the majority of them women in black, paid their respects to the dead.

Around 10 A.M. a procession of some 200 schoolchildren arrived bearing an elaborate wreath. They were from Bharata Vidyalai, a coeducational school; girls in the right-hand row, boys on the left, many of them patently Chinese or Indian in origin (some boys wearing Sikh turbans). The children orderly and regimented entered the hall in cohorts, and paid their respects to the urn on their knees (the non-Buddhists *waj*-ing and the Buddhists *krab*-ing).[16]

Soon afterward another procession of schoolchildren bearing another wreath arrived; they were all girls accompanied by some ten female teachers and one male teacher. They went through the same motions as their predecessors. . . . As the morning progressed, more laymen and more schoolchildren kept arriving, clogging up the approaches and the corridors of the hall. And, no doubt, over the 100-day period the public would pay its respects in this manner, the monks' chanting being intensified in the evenings, until the grand climactic cremation, which would be attended by their majesties, ministers of state, titled monks and thousands of ordinary people, both monks and laymen.

Politicians and Ecclesiastical Dignitaries

In this section I shall provide evidence for three assertions concerning the nexus between politicians and monk-dignitaries. The first relates to how in contemporary Thailand it is not only the constitutional monarch who plays the historical role of patron of the sangha as, for example, at *kathin* presentations, but also various ministries and departments of state, headed by prominent politicians, that act as corporate patrons of Buddhism.

Thus, for instance, at the end of the Lent of 1971 several such governmental units made presentations of gifts that were contributed by the member officials or officers as the case may be. The following are some prominent examples:

The *kathin* presentation on October 18, 1971, to Wat Traimit, a royal wat in the capital, was sponsored by the office of the prime minister (Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn being an army man). A book written by Dr. Thalerng Thamrongnawasawasdi, the deputy undersecretary of agriculture, "praising the leadership of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachoin and saying he had brought much progress to the nation since 1963" was distributed as the procession traveled to the wat (*The Bangkok Post*, October 19, 1971).

The donor of the *kathin* presentation to the royal wat of Rajapatigaram

[16] *Waj* = bringing palms of the hand together in front of the chest; *krab* = to bend over and touch the floor with the forehead and then *waj*, this being repeated three times.

on the king's behalf was the army, which gave a cash gift of 10,000 baht to the wat and gifts of 50 baht to each of the 60 resident monks and 40 baht to each of the 17 resident novices. In addition, a medicine cupboard and 67 blankets were given the wat, plus a typewriter and books and pencils for use by the municipal school situated in the wat grounds.

Wat Chakkravat, again a royal wat, had two years ago the office of the prime minister (Thanom Kittikachorn) as the donor, last year the governor of Bangkok, and this year (1971) the police department.

Printing a picture of the event, a news item reported: "Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presents a Kathin robe to a monk at Wat Ratsitta in Bangkok Yai District of Thonburi yesterday . . ." (*The Bangkok Post*, November 2, 1971).

My second assertion is that prominent politicians, especially the ruling field marshals and generals, in their own right, as individual personages, act in the grand historical manner of Buddhist kings, engaging in conspicuous acts of charity and merit making. While it is no doubt partly true to say that they act in this manner in the full knowledge of the political advantages to be reaped, it is also true to propose that important politicians are propelled to model certain of their acts and to reenact parts of the careers of the heroes of traditional chronicles.

Consider these examples of philanthropy in the grand style, as reported in newspapers: General Prasert Ruchirawongse, director general of the police department and minister of health was reported as visiting Khon Kaen province in the northeast and being the recipient of a Sukhwan ceremony held in his honor. The paper, which carried a prominent photograph of the ceremony, went on to say:

> Sukhwan, meaning blessing, is a traditional Northeast custom afforded important visitors to wish them good luck. . . . On Friday the Police Chief presented the monks of Wat Klang in Muang District, Khon Kaen, with Kathin robes and donated 40,000 baht towards the construction of a new bot for the temple (*The Bangkok Post*, October 17, 1971).

Another issue of the same paper reported on General Prasert's public act of charity thus:

> Police Hospital is expected to receive three or four million baht from donations collected on the occasion of the birthday of Police General Prasert Ruchirawongse. . . .
>
> General Prasert traditionally does not accept birthday presents but invites people to make contributions to the Police Hospital instead. . . . Streams of people will be arriving at his home from early this morning to express their good wishes (*The Bangkok Post*, December 4, 1971).

General Prapass Charusathiara, minister of interior and deputy chairman of the National Executive Council, was probably the most powerful politician in Thailand in 1971. It was reported in *The Bangkok Post* that

he had forbidden soldiers of the Royal Thai Army and officials of the Interior Ministry to visit him at his residence on the occasion of his 59th birthday, exhorting them instead to send birthday cards. "On his birthday tomorrow, General Prapass will hold a religious merit-making ceremony, and give sixteen scholarships, as earlier practised" (*The Bangkok Post*, November 24, 1971).

Some of the general's birthday proceedings were described as follows:

> Yesterday his busy day started with the opening ceremony at 7:30 A.M. of the apartments for families of army officers at Klong Prapa.
>
> He later presented 118 "Phra Buddha Singh Chai Mongkol" images to various regiments in a ceremony at his residence. . . .
>
> He turned over 115,000 baht in scholarships to needy but capable students (of various universities and schools). General Prapass also participated in religious rites . . . (*The Bangkok Post*, November 26, 1971).

The newspaper carried a photograph of this presentation being received by the rector of Chulalongkorn University.

My third proposition is that, just as it is advantageous for politicians to be seen and heard engaging in meritorious actions and to participate in religious festivities, it is likewise advantageous for monks in high places who, apart from a personal interest to climb the ecclesiastical ladder, have plans to extend the name and glory of their wat to establish links with prominent politicians, generals, and civilians who can be called upon to sponsor their grand building or fund-raising schemes.

The following are two examples that speak for themselves.

1. I have already referred to General Prapass' distribution of images to soldiers. By good fortune I was able to gather some information that supplements this news item and throws light on the kind of connections between high-ranking politicians and monks. Wat Chakkravat, a temple with which I was closely in contact, was the venue for the ceremony held in May 1971 for a *buddhapisek* ceremony for the purpose of sacralization of Buddha statues and medallions, which were commissioned by General Prapass for distribution to the army on his birthday. The abbot of Wat Chakkravat is a *somdet* and a member of the Council of Elders and an ecclesiastical governor general; his secretary (*lekha*) was a young energetic monk who had a reputation as an astrologer and who had relations with famous generals and police officers and politicians and to whose homes he was invited for meals and astrological consultations.

I happened to visit the secertary-astrologer monk on November 23, 1971, and he told me that he had been invited to the general's house for lunch and for conducting religious rites on the latter's birthday two days later. He also told me about the *buddhapisek* ceremony referred to previously and then showed me a glass case containing some 56 small amulets and many packages of buddha images that had been blessed in May and that he would take to the general's house for distribution to the army and his friends and supporters.

On a subsequent occasion when I visited the monk, he showed me

photographs of a ceremony held in his wat for the fixing of *chaw fa* (spire) on a new building called the *sala gaan parian*, which was the pride of the abbot and his secretary. The ceremony was important for the wat, and the photographs left me in no doubt as to this wat's ability to secure the ceremonial presence of the country's mighty and powerful. The prime minister actually held the cord attached to the *chaw fa* while it was hoisted up into place; the chief of the First Army and the commander in chief of the metropolitan police were in attendance. On the ecclesiastical side, the supreme patriarch was present, together with other eminent monks, the most eminent of whom was the abbot of Wat Pho (who later in 1972 succeeded to the position of patriarch when the present incumbent died). During the course of the ceremony the prime minister also distributed certificates of merit to those laymen who had contributed large sums of money for the construction of the building.

2. Now for another example of how the participation of politicians serves the purposes of the sangha, of how the sponsorship of the secular leaders is necessary for prominent monks to implement their religious projects. It relates to the foreign minister (Thanat Khoman) participating as the chief guest at a "pouring of gold" ceremony staged on September 6, 1971. The "pouring of gold" refers to the first step in the making of a Buddha statue, when some molten gold is poured into the clay mold as the core ingredient before other kinds of molten metal are added. This particular statue was to be installed in a Thai Buddhist wat that was being built in Los Angeles. The chief organizer of the ceremony was the ecclesiastical governor of Chonburi province, who was a much-traveled monk and had before promotion lived in Wat Mahathad in the capital, in the spacious grounds of which the ceremony was held. (The governor told me enthusiastically of his travels in Europe, the highlight of which was an audience with the pope, who had presented him with three books.)

The day previous to the pouring was the day for collecting the metal and funds. When I visited the wat, I saw in its grounds a large tent in which sat the ecclesiastical governor, surrounded by monks and lay well-wishers, holding court, greeting effusively, and shouting commands. Monks and lay helpers received from a multitude of pious laymen's contributions of old metal, vessels and ornaments made of copper, brass, silver, and iron, and more importantly gifts of money and gold jewelry. The pious givers brought their small contributions of metal or money and before presenting them would say a prayer. All this metal would be used to make the sacred statue.

At the pouring ceremony next day a few thousand laymen and monks packed the site. Many monks and novices also occupied the upper stories of surrounding buildings and watched from the windows and balconies. The foreign minister and his wife and his entourage of foreign officers and police arrived and wove their way through the crowd to the tent. The minister lit candles and prostrated himself before the Buddha altar. Then, after the officiating monk recited the three refuges, the minister was handed

a bowl containing gold jewelry, into which he, in what looked like a spontaneous gesture, dropped the gold tie pin he was wearing. He walked up to the clay mold that was being fired, and while a large assembly of monks chanted *suad*, he dropped the gold into a white-hot metal crucible held by one of the craftsmen dressed in white. The melted gold was then poured by the minister into the statue's mold. The craftsmen then poured more metal into the mold. When the monks' chanting stopped, the witnessing lay public broke ranks and had a free-for-all trying to capture pieces of the white cord (*sai sin*) that had been held by the monks and had surrounded the clay mold and began to tie the cord to their wrists.

Concluding Comments

In this chapter we have explored some of the formal and informal relationships between the sangha and the polity, especially at the highest levels of power and prestige. The arena of this interaction is principally in the capital city.

A conspicuous fact is the increasing hierarchization and formalization of the sangha's administrative framework in recent years. The system of ranks, titles, and associated privileges, not least of which is the appointment of personal secretaries and assistants, helps to conjure up a picture of an elaborate ecclesiastical machinery.

But at the same time we should guard against exaggerating the substance and weight of this ecclesiastical machinery and against attributing to the sangha *undue* political power that it does not possess. We have seen in a previous chapter how various acts passed by the secular authorities relating to sangha organization expressed in fact the strength of the secular political powers vis-à-vis the sangha. In this chapter we have seen that behind the façade of an ecclesiastical bureaucracy imitating the civilian model lurks a different reality, a fundamental asymmetry signified by the sangha's administrative affairs being serviced and "managed" by a Department of Religious Affairs, which is a relatively minor unit in the Education Ministry and which has small resources to expend on the promotion of religion. A conspicuous asymmetry is evident at the provincial and district levels, where the sangha's meager machinery and facilities compare unfavorably with those of the secular authorities.

In such circumstances, much depends on the vigor and energy of individual abbots and individual ecclesiastical functionaries as to what they will make of their religious offices. We have seen how the ecclesiastical governor of the province of Thonburi was able to marshal local resources, to forge an administrative network, and to initiate activities to promote "the purity and security of the Sangha." By the same token there are others who make little of their positions.[17]

[17] For example, Jane Bunnag (1973, pp. 69–73) describes the ecclesiastical governor of Ayutthaya province, 71 years old, as leading an exemplary monk's life in a restrained

Whatever the realities of power and administrative muscle, there is no doubt as to the state's and the politicians' backing of the sangha functionaries and their ceremonial activities for their mutual benefit. The Department of Religious Affairs spends more money on the stipends of ecclesiastical functionaries, on their fans, and on the staging of religious festivals than it spends on monks' education. The ministers and generals and colonels engage in highly visible merit-making activities; in turn, high-ranking ecclesiastics solicit their presence and patronage when they initiate activities for the material benefit and prestige of their own monasteries.

This symbiosis is a feature of contemporary Thai society, especially at the higher levels of the sangha and secular politics. We shall in a subsequent chapter see how this ecclesiastical hierarchy does participate in a missionary program (*thammathud*) that has political overtones and is devoted to national development.

Here, in conclusion, let me probe a little further into the implications of the connections between the rulers and the monks. The connections may be simply expressed as the rulers showing patronage of the sangha and the sangha (especially dignitaries) helping to legitimate the position of the rulers. This exchange of patronage and legitimacy gains in depth if, taking the generals and colonels as our prototype rulers (since they not only command the armed forces but also occupy the positions of ministers, deputy ministers, and heads of many bureaucracies), we compare their social origins with those of the monks.

Let me briefly state the family backgrounds of certain top politicians in Thailand who were active in the recent past and/or were active in 1971:

> The late Field Marshal Sarit's father was an army officer (probably a major) who was born in Bangkok and was posted in the northeast as interpreter to French officials and as a local administrator.* He attained the title of *luang*. Sarit himself was educated in the military cadet school, entered the army, and made his way up.
>
> Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, who succeeded Sarit as prime minister, also had his entire education in the military academy. His father was a relatively minor government official from Tak province who was invested with the title of *khun* (the lowest title conferred on lay officials).**
>
> General Prapass Charusathiara, the minister of interior and commander in chief of the Royal Thai Army (in 1971) comes from a somewhat more elevated background. His father was one of the earliest students of Chulalongkorn University and was invested with the title of *phraya* as governor (*chao muang*) of Lampang; his origins were in Bangkok and his wife came

disengaged way but by the same token incapable of taking an interest in administration. He was not a scholar, nor a preacher, just a good monk.

* According to one source (Keyes, 1966), Sarit's father was a northeasterner who was appointed a district officer in Nakhon Phanom province; Sarit's half-brother became a governor of the same province. But Sarit was raised and educated in Bangkok.

** The titles in ascending order are *khun, luang, phra, phraya,* and *chao phraya.*

from Lampang. Prapass himself was educated at the military academy.

Air Chief Marshal Thawee Chulasap, who was also minister of communications in 1971, comes from a family of prosperous rural landed gardeners (*chao suan*), probably of *durian* fruit, who were based in Nonthaburi. After completing *matayom* 8, Thawee entered the military academy.

General Prasert Ruchirawongse who in 1971 was director general of the police department and minister of public health, also stems from a rural landed family of prosperous gardeners based in Chantaburi.

Major General Sangna Kittikachorn, deputy minister of foreign affairs, educated at the military academy, is a brother of Field Marshal Thanom mentioned previously.

Pote Sarasin, minister of national development, whose father was a high government official with the title of *phraya*, comes from a wealthy family; he obtained his higher education in England. His father, of Bangkok-Chinese origins, was trained as a doctor in America with missionary aid but apparently subsequently became Buddhist; he was awarded the title of *phraya* after he served on a mission to Phrabang.

Thanat Khoman, foreign minister, is a professional career diplomat of nonmilitary origins. His father of Chinese ancestry had the high rank of *phraya* and was a judge; he married a well-endowed lady of the court; some say she was earlier presented to King Chulalongkorn as a concubine. The family is wealthy and is Bangkok-based. Thanat obtained his university education abroad.

Sukich Nimmahemind, minister of education in 1971, later resigned. A scholar who was educated in England, he comes from a well-known old family, from Chiangmai, of Chinese origin and having important banking and commercial interests.

Although these examples by no means exhaust all the conspicuous politicians in recent years, they are adequate to make the point that, barring members of well-placed elite (but not royal or aristocratic) families like Pote Sarasin, Thanat Khoman, and Sukich Nimmahemind (who incidentally are civilians), the others listed who are soldiers have made their way into the corridors of power primarily from the stratum of relatively minor or middle-range officials or from the category of rural landed families (although a few clearly had better-placed generals or high officials for their fathers).[18] An important avenue for their rise to power is the fact that they have been educated at the Bangkok-based royal military academy which was the seedbed of budding generals and which in former days

[18] My inference is strengthened by the following further information relating to the most prominent politicians of the forties and early fifties: (1) Field Marshal Phibunnsongkhram was the son of a farmer; he was educated at the military academy before being sent to France for further military studies. (2) Police General Phao Siyanon's father was a civil servant under the monarchy, and Phao was educated at the military academy. (3) Pridi Phanomyong, though he never became a soldier, was the son of a farmer and merchant of apparently good financial standing (Wilson, 1962, p. 121). Incidentally, we may note that Phibun and Pridi were of part-Chinese origins, their mothers being Thai.

provided complete education from primary grades to graduation as full-fledged army or police officers.[19] In many ways a most important channel to power in contemporary Thailand is the military academy, which has increasingly become privileged, self-recruiting, and, for the outsider, highly competitive. While it is still open to real talent today, it caters importantly to the interests of those already established in the services.

Now while there is thus some evidence for saying that the military men in power today have their origins in the official stratum, the rural landed, and the urban petite bourgeoisie, we have earlier provided overwhelming evidence for the thesis that the vast majority of all categories of monks – the ordinary monks, the famous scholar-monks, the prestige-enjoying ecclesiastical officials and titled monks – basically originate among the poor rural peasantry and have traveled from village to city. Figure 16.2 shows the complementary relationship between the monks and the generals and colonels. In their own way both have moved upward from their respective but different social strata; both are predisposed to be conservative, traditionalist, and in favor of a formula that maintains the status quo of religion, kingship, and political stability. It is thus not difficult to see why the powerful and mighty, though men of the sword, find it natural to give patronage to the sangha and to appreciate the political value of the legitimation that monks can give them by officiating at the rituals that they sponsor and by consenting to confer merit upon them by receiving gifts.

This traditionalism that characterizes the army's ruling elite and the dignitaries and elite monks of the sangha should not blind us to the fact that their careers and their achievements represent a real dynamism in Thai society – a dynamism that began with Chulalongkorn's initiation of modernization but was perhaps markedly released by the 1932 revolution – that has allowed persons from the ranks of the commoners (particularly the lower rungs) to utilize certain channels of mobility to make it to the top. Thus Thai society from the 1940s to the 1970s presents us with a face that is both still and mobile. The soldiers who have captured and exercise power have simply replaced the authoritarian and hierarchical system of monarchical times with a structure that manifests the same or similar authoritarianism and monarchical features. There is thus a continuity of political power, although continuity of political legitimacy is more proble-

[19] A fuller note is warranted. The comprehensive royal military academy, which taught from primary grade to graduation, produced the generals and field marshals listed previously, and also others such as General Pong Bunakaw, minister of industries (1971), Air Chief Marshal Bunchoo Chantarubedsa, chief of the air force, and Lieutenant General Sawaeng Sennanagrong, minister without portfolio (whose father was also a general).

Today the military academy admits pupils only after they have obtained *matayom* 6; after a two-year training program, pupils are admitted to the military academy, where after five years' training they are awarded a B.S. and a rank as officer in one of the armed services. The police academy is somewhat inferior in that it gives only three years' training to its officers.

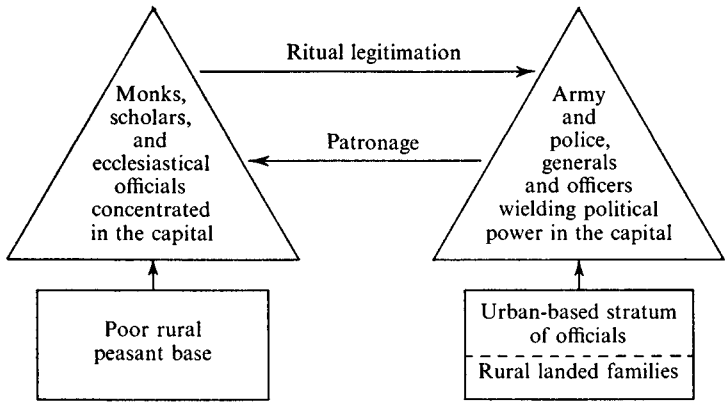

Ritual legitimation
Monks, scholars, and ecclesiastical officials concentrated in the capital
Patronage
Army and police, generals and officers wielding political power in the capital
Poor rural peasant base
Urban-based stratum of officials
Rural landed families

Figure 16.2. Symbiosis between generals and monks.

matic (as we shall see later). Nevertheless, the social origins of the soldiers make clear to us that their political dominance represents an access to power on the part of members of certain strata composed of petty officials and prosperous farmers and petty landowners, who in previous monarchical regimes were excluded from favor and power. The intensification of the process whereby youth of poor rural origins join the monkhood and can achieve on the path of religious vocation fits into the picture as another dynamic feature of modern Thai society.

17. Reformism and Ideological Transformation Based on Tradition

In this chapter I should like to deal with how some of the leading scholar-monks and laymen in Thailand have in the course of this century attempted to interpret the relevance of the Buddhist dhamma (doctrine) and of the sangha (order of monks) for contemporary society. There are two general aspects to these attempts at formulating a religion relevant to the times. There is a looking back to the pristine form of the religion and its canonical texts (as opposed to later accretions) in order to find the alleged pure and timeless truth. There is also the attempt to formulate answers to challenges and tasks that confront the modern man of religion by virtue of his living in a specific moment of history. Thus the search for the timeless truths and the situational truths involves *interpretation*, and the answers advanced by different advocates may therefore crystallize differently.

Social scientists primarily focusing on the modernization process have tried to put different labels on these different mixes: (1) Thus religious *neotraditionalism* is characterized as a stance "in which the modern components are maintained only as instruments for furthering nonmodern or antimodern values and ends," "an ideology designed to keep change to a minimum and defend the *status quo* as far as possible." (2) *Religious reformation* by contrast is seen as "a movement that reinterprets a particular religious tradition to show not only that it is compatible with modernization but also that, when truly understood, the tradition vigorously demands at least important aspects of modernity."[1] (3) *Scripturalism* is associated with "religious-mindedness" rather than "religiousness" (i.e., "celebrating belief rather than what belief asserts") and is characterized by a "transformation of religious symbols from imagistic revelations of the divine . . . to ideological assertions of the divine's importance"; it is viewed as a process that is linked with incipient nationalism and also loss of spiritual self-confidence.[2] (4) *Secularism* (or *secularization*) of thought is seen as connoting "the loss of power of classical religious symbols to sustain a properly religious faith" and as one product among others of the impact of positive science.[3]

[1] See Bellah (1965), especially the epilogue. [2] Geertz (1973), Ch. 3.
[3] Ibid., pp. 103–104.

We can extend this list of labels by surveying the literature – more labels will occur as we proceed – but at this stage I want to make a few observations. At any juncture of time all these and other ideological postures may coexist in the same society among differently placed groups or individuals, though one or the other school of thought may be the dominant contender(s); moreover, any single school of thought may in practice mix these orientations in diverse ways.

Secondly – and this is the point I shall give greater attention to – it must be stated at the outset that the canonical texts of Buddhism (just as the Bible of Christianity or the core texts of any other religion) are complex and rich in meaning, full of redundancies and variations, and by the same token paradoxical, ambiguous, and capable of different levels of interpretation at various points. In my view some of the major issues relating to the religious pursuit and political action in both early and historical Buddhism are incapable of unambiguous and clear resolutions; rather, the texts themselves portray dialectical tensions, polarities and complementarities, in the treatment of basic issues. Appreciation of this point increases as we critically study the exegetical views of the best of *both Western and Asian scholars*. And if this observation has validity – as I believe it has – then any perspective that naïvely assumes that there are certain unambiguous prescriptions and value orientations in Buddhism from which can be deduced behavioral correlates that bear an intrinsic and inherent relation to the religion is inaccurate, usually misguided, and sometimes pernicious. In other words, the question of the nexus between Buddhism and this-worldly conduct is more open than has been imagined by certain scholars, including the illustrious Max Weber.

Fortunately, a book is available that conveniently and appositely documents one example of just this point of doctrinal ambiguities and multivalencies. Welbon's *The Buddhist Nirvana and Its Western Interpreters* (1968) – which primarily concentrates on the research and views on nirvana by Western scholars, spanning a century from roughly the 1830s onward (the gallery of names includes, among others, Burnouf, Max Muller, James D'Alwis,[4] Robert Caesar Childers, Hermann Oldenberg, the Rhys Davidses, La Vallée Poussin, and Stcherbatsky)[5] – comes to this conclusion: "It need be neither cowardice nor ignorance that forces us to say finally that nirvana's "meanings" are many and include both annihilation and bliss, negation and affirmation, non-existence and existence" (p. 302).

Not only did much of the research of this galaxy of scholars center on the origins of Buddhism and the explication of its major doctrinal tenets, but also by virtue of having similar theoretical concerns and consulting similar textual sources they presented their views, characterized by fine distinctions and nuances, in polemical confrontations.

[4] D'Alwis was a Sinhalese, not a Westerner as is wrongly implied in Welbon's account.

[5] The quotations that I give citing the views of these writers in the next few pages are all taken from Welbon (1968).

Muller, who resided in Oxford from 1846 to 1900, was already in the 1850s attempting his elucidation of nirvana vis-à-vis the views pronounced by Burnouf and Barthelemy St. Hilaire. Beginning by agreeing with Burnouf's thesis that the Buddhist nirvana implied atheism, nihilism, and annihilation, Muller later saw his way to the view that nirvana, though signifying a nihilism, "a relapse into a being which is nothing but himself," did not necessarily imply annihilation (though certain texts carry that meaning); and, finally, resting his judgment upon a method of historical stratification that separated the earlier *vinaya* and *sutras* texts from the later *abhidharma*, he pronounced that "Nirvana is annihilation" cannot be asserted categorically. This final presentation – into which entered the argument that the *Dhammapada* (which he translated) in several places contradicted absolute annihilation and provided a conception of nirvana "altogether irreconcilable with the third part of the Buddhist canon" – was a schematic view of nirvana seen at three levels of interpretation – (1) nirvana as entrance of the soul into rest, a subduing of all wishes and desires, indifference to joy and pain, freedom from the circle of existences that is the view of Buddha, his disciples, and Buddhists today; (2) nirvana as a gross paradise, which is the view of "a large number of uneducated, poorly trained Buddhists"; and finally (3) the nirvana of the philosophers to which Buddhism owes its metaphysics, which through constant negations "at last became an empty nothing, a philosophical myth."

Writing from the 1870s onward in rebuttal of Muller, D'Alwis and Childers argued from the methodological stance that the Pali canonical literature must be taken as a totality and a unity that cannot be partitioned. D'Alwis, a Sinhalese Anglican priest, took his stand on the view that if one admits that the Buddha consistently denied the existence of an eternal soul and of a supreme creator god, one must also admit that the Buddha's nirvana is absolute annihilation, which D'Alwis found personally repulsive and harrowing. But D'Alwis in turn found his way to a theory of two nirvanas (based on a distinction Muller had apparently missed), namely, nirvana attainable in this life (*sopadhisesanirvana*) and nirvana attainable postmortem (*nirupadhisesanirvana*). Childers, in turn, remarking that "According to the relative importance attached by them to these expressions [Western] scholars have variously held Nirvana to be a state of blissful immunity from human passion, or the total extinction of being," resolved the puzzle by demarcating two nirvanas, on lines similar to D'Alwis' – nirvana as "the state of blissful sanctification called Arhatship" and as "the annihilation of existence in which Arhatship ends."

Oldenberg, whose first book, *Buddha*, was published in 1881 and who until his death in 1920 maintained a remarkably consistent view, challenged Childers' theory of the two nirvanas with the assertion that "We know this much only to begin with, that it is the domain over which the law of causality has no power" and that the whole question of annihilation or external existence after death, eternal bliss or everlasting nothing, was misplaced and misguided because the Buddha was silent on and disallowed

certain questions such as whether the ego is and whether the perfected saint lives after death. For Oldenberg the state of sinlessness and painlessness, the state of deliverance from the law of causality through sanctification in this life is nirvana, though he was moved to make the caveat that the "dialectical consequence," the conclusion dictated by logic or dialectic alone, would be that nirvana is ultimately annihilation, though this is not the actuality of the Buddha's teaching.

The Rhys Davidses, a husband-and-wife team, publishers of the Buddhist Pali texts and contributors to Buddhist studies for over 60 years, deserve to be taken into account in any detailed study. Here let me only allude to the views on nirvana held by T. W. Rhys Davids, views that are congenial to the outlook of many practicing Buddhists. For him, nirvana literally means "going out" or "extinction" and signifies the "disappearance of that sinful, yearning, grasping condition of mind and heart. . . . Nirvana is therefore a moral condition, a pure, calm, clear state of mind, and if translated at all, may best be rendered HOLINESS – holiness, that is, in the Buddhist sense – perfect peace, goodness and wisdom." Gotama with regard to nirvana was "expressing no opinion at all, either one way or the other, to existence after death, but was proclaiming a salvation from the sorrows of life which was to be reached here on earth in a changed state of mind. . . ." The culmination of the eightfold path in Arhatship, an ineffable state of human achievement in this world, is one of the aspects of which is called nirvana. Thus as against Childers' postmortem view of nirvana, Rhys Davids favors its premortem achievement and, in contrast to Childers, D'Alwis, and Muller, he stressed the this-worldly ineffable state of the religious objectives.

If Rhys Davids' style was not particularly polemical, this was not the case with the protagonists La Vallée Poussin and Stcherbatsky. La Vallée Poussin, the author of *Nirvana* (1925), propounding a larger view of religion than the merely textual and canonical (a vision somewhat marred by a dedicated Catholic's open disdain for the philosophical adequacy of the Buddhist tenets), made a distinction between the dogmatic and the philosophical aspects of Buddhism and suggested that nirvana, in its primitive manifestation, was bliss without any afterthought of annihilation. "Buddhism was a religion, a faith before becoming a philosophy; for the practicing Buddhist *nirvana* often meant a blissful state," whereas the annihilation gloss is "the result of the philosophic inquiry, a mere scholastic corollary."

Whereas La Vallée Poussin questioned the view that the original pure Buddhism is found only in the Pali texts and made distinctions between a popular devotional form and a clerical mystical form of Buddhism, and postulated a hierarchy of meanings in the texts clustering around nirvana, Stcherbatsky in direct controversy with him – basing his search for origins in the texts and finding the central doctrinal idea out of which various Buddhist schools branched out in the conception of dharma (the idea that

existence is "an interplay of a plurality of subtle, ultimate, not further analysable elements of Matter, Mind and Force") – favored the view that the attainment of nirvana meant "the annihilation of existence totally."

My purpose in giving this detailed attention to Welbon's account of a century of scholarship on nirvana as a dialectical polemical confrontation is to indicate that the scholarly views all seek authority in a corpus of texts that allows of no firm conclusion among a spectrum or parameter of meanings, ranging between annihilation and bliss, between premortem and postmortem achievement, between a this-worldly state and an eternal other-worldly state, and other such polarities and paradoxes. We shall have to keep this lesson in mind when we deal with the religious formulations of Thai commentators of recent times.

The plan of this chapter is as follows. After briefly recalling the pattern of religious trends in the Mongkut era of the 1850s (which we discussed in Chapter 11), I shall describe certain religious thought developments in the 1930s, and again in the late 1960s and early 1970s. My fixing on these three points of time is partly adventitious (because we have some information for these periods), but not entirely so, because I believe that while from the 1850s onward to the present time there has been a continued process of religious revitalization that has accompanied political centralization and economic expansion, yet for certain reasons the three points of time represent spurts along this upward curve.

Why may this be so? Because the mid-nineteenth century was a period when Mongkut both as monk and later as king engaged with Western colonizing powers and Western civilization and, in response, spearheaded from above a royalist revitalization of religion and initiated the first steps toward modernization. The 1930s represent a maturation point of the educational expansion and bureaucratic proliferation initiated by Mongkut and Chulalongkorn, when a group of newly educated commoners seized power from an absolutist king; the turmoil and the vitality of the time expressed themselves vis-à-vis religion both as a criticism of its institutional weakness and as an increased participation of laymen in the promotion of both doctrinal and organizational aspects of religion. The late 1960s and early 1970s – that is, the present time – is a period when it is the scholarly and/or activistic monks who have taken the dominant part in giving a new thrust to their religion, and this revitalization is closely linked, as we have seen, to the monk's keen participation in a system of monastic education that is expanding in scope and is an avenue of mobility from village to metropolis.

The Mongkut Reforms

The religious reforms promoted during the Mongkut era were, we saw, characterized by the following features: There was advocacy of a returning to the true canon, of searching for the true texts and faithfully following

them, in short, *scripturalism.* There was an accent on doctrinal ideas and abstract concepts and the devaluation of superstitious ritual, an orientation that we may typify as *intellectualism.* There was an attempt to translate the pantheon, its gods and demons, into a new metaphorical idiom, which we can label *euhemerism.* There was an attempt to correlate and reconcile Buddhist doctrines with "positive science" as advocated by the West (a reconciliation that once again put emphasis on the written word and rejected accretions, myths, and superstitions), which operation we may call *rationalism.* Finally, there was an attempt to train a new breed of orthodox monks, which resulted in (incipient) *sectarianism.* Together with this purification of the religious stables went the process of *popularization,* whereby the Buddhist doctrine and message were carried to the people in simplified catechistic terms. This popularization and propagandization entailed the use of modern media of communication such as the press, the devising of new organizational forms, and the inculcation in monks of effective techniques of dissemination (e.g., impromptu sermons, polemical debating styles, use of the vernacular, etc.).

And it is this aspect of Mongkut's revitalization that in fact inevitably led to the development of refurbished forms of institutional worship and ritual as, for example, exemplified by Mongkut's composing of new *paritta* chants and prayers and promotion of new Buddhist festivals (such as *Wisakha Bucha* and *Makha Bucha*). Thus we learn the lesson that reformist, scripturalist, and rationalist movements – even though they begin with a puritanical condemnation of superstitions and rituals – in turn establish their own recommended cults and forms of worship. We could perhaps call this the routinization of orthodoxy.

All these dimensions of revitalization in the mid-nineteenth century and later owe a major part of their stimulus to the confrontation with Christianity and its missionaries and with Western civilization in its Victorian and imperial form. This confrontation evoked a double-headed response that combined the resources of the traditional local religion with new weaponry borrowed from the challengers themselves. There is a remarkable similarity in the preoccupations and the style of Buddhist revitalization in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand during this phase of the colonial impact, which was direct in the case of the former two and indirect in the case of the third.

Religious Trends in the 1930s

The reformism of Mongkut was promoted from the top and was a limited movement revolving around him and his coterie of select monks. The religious ferment of the 1930s was somewhat more broad-based, for it corresponded with a new phase in politics when the newly educated elites staked a claim for their right to participate in the political process.

Thus the educated commoner's participation in politics is paralleled by

the educated layman's involvement with Buddhism. This involvement can be said to focus on two large questions: (1) the validity of Buddhist religious doctrines, ethics, and beliefs in the face of the canons of Western science and modern knowledge and (2) the relevance of Buddhism and the sangha for modern life and this-worldly activity.

The science-and-religion discussion of the 1930s cannot have been affect laden and radical, given the fact that the "sentiment favouring change, wherever it occurs, is moderate" among even the educated Thai who have a conservative inclination (Landon 1939, p. 213). The same disinclination for polemical doctrinal debate is again reflected in the fact that Thai Buddhism is relatively free from sectarianism. The Mahanikai/Thammayut sectarian split, as we have discovered earlier, is not a radical one doctrinally. As in most Theravada countries, orthodoxy is more a matter of disciplinary behavior than a matter of belief, and, doctrinally, a fairly wide variation of points of view is tolerated within the sangha because no great sectarian movements arise from them. The Thai situation thus is dramatically different from those of China and Japan, which have had a tradition of separatist religious sects.

Nevertheless, the ferment of the 1930s did produce two points of view with regard to the science-religion question. Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn, the propagator of strident nationalist-militarist ideas that in their fullest development were expressed as an expansionary Pan-Thaism (we shall deal with his ideas in Chapter 19), advanced a conservative or neotraditionalist argument in keeping with his political slogans. Luang Vichitr wrote a book entitled *Phutanuphap* (1931) in which he apparently affirmed the Buddha's command of miraculous powers, not only with respect to moving men's hearts by teaching his doctrine but also with respect to his ability to control natural elements. The Buddha needed to demonstrate these latter powers of *iddhi* so that he could outdo the *yogi* who was adept at performing remarkable tricks. Luang Vichitr also affirmed the future of the Buddha to this world, and the relics and original elements of the Buddha reforming again at the end of time. Landon comments: "This idea rests on the theory that the entering of Nirvana was threefold. The first step was accomplished when the passions entered Nirvana at enlightenment, the second was when the Buddha was eighty years of age and entered Nirvana, and the third is to be accomplished at the final entry of the primary bodily elements of Buddha in the future" (p. 212). Landon also cites the views of an ex-monk Pali scholar, Nai Pui Saeng, who in his book *Phutaprachaya* (1935) argued that the traditional teaching with regard to heaven and hell, and man's place in the eternal scheme, should be maintained:

> He says that the lower class people are restrained from sin by their fear of hell. Middle class people with some education are saved from sin and want to do good by their desire for heaven. The choicest element of mankind is held to the true course by the search for Nirvana. When these three fundamental ideas have their place in social thinking, then progress can be guaranteed.

These are examples of the affirmation of the traditional graduated cosmology and graduated society in the face of challenge and impending change. But such views of a quarantine nature that argue for a Buddhism that is superior and untouched by modern scientific thought were subordinate to the more natural responses of the educated intelligentsia, many of whom were trying "to eliminate from Buddhism anything which conflicts with modern scientific knowledge." "The usual solution among the writers . . . is to explain that both science and Buddhism are rational and intelligent and that Buddhism supplies what science lacks in ethics and morals" (Landon, p. 227).

If this response (familiar to students of modern Buddhism) can be said to signify a rationalist position, then it seems to me important, at this stage of our discussion, to separate two aspects of it. There is the scripturalist back-to-the-pristine-canon response that tries to argue that the unalloyed canonical truths are either consistent with or not invalidated by the materialist assumptions and causal perspective of positive science. This position thus recommends the continued practice of the pure form of Buddhism as the best solution to life's challenges. There is another scripturalist interpretive response that tries to argue that the scriptures are consistent with, indeed recommend, a certain kind of this-worldly activity. This posture champions an activism of social concern as being a fulfillment of canonical recommendations.

The first kind of rationalistic scriptural response was, for instance, advanced from the thirties by a European monk, Bhikkhu Khemo Navayansit, who in his *New Buddhist Catechism,* published in both Thai and English, criticized monks for living in large monasteries in cities and upbraided them for being too much attached to worldly ways and recommended their return to forest life. Interestingly, he attributed the decay of the quality of their lives to their lack of canonical knowledge and education and apparently expressed the view that "As soon as general education and modern science have, as in the West, penetrated the broad masses, then the Eastern nations may take up again the high aim and ideal of a new Buddhist life and culture. The change is to come within Buddhism through a return to the original teaching interpreted in terms of the best scientific thinking" (Landon, p. 227). A Thai monk, Pramaha Thong Su'p, who had achieved *parian* 9 in Pali studies, is reported as stating that the Buddha was a man and no god, that Buddhism is not a religion but a way of life, that pristine Buddhism suits all ages, and that only its traditions and customs need to be revised to suit the times (pp. 227–228). There are certain other familiar pronouncements and orientations that are part and parcel of the back-to-pristine-Buddhism-as-a-way-of-life school, namely, the alleged materialism of modern times spawned by science and technology and the concurrent failure to develop high ideals of conduct (a lack that can be supplied by Buddhist ethics), and the denunciation of ceremonials and other "blind superstitious" practices.

But it is the second strand of rationalistic response advocating a positive this-worldly activity that I think is the more decisive, interesting, and less banal position with respect to subsequent developments in Thailand. In the thirties this was less a monk's message than that of the concerned layman. In this era of heightened politics we have laymen coming to the fore in interpreting religion, in organizing religious organizations such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), in spreading religion through the medium of schools and tracts.

"The religious teaching of the young is more and more in the hands of laymen. Many of the vigorous books on religious subjects both for the young and old are the product of lay pens" (Landon 1939, p. 218).

One of the major preoccupations of the Buddhist laymen of this time was the place of monks in a changing world, a question that was more absorbing to them than the discussion of monastic abuses. The People's Assembly, as we noted in Chapter 12, was a forum for discussing among other things this important question, which was phrased as being integrally related to the dissemination of the true tenets of Buddhism, shorn of false observances, to the people at large in order to inform their daily lives. The People's Assembly discussed the Buddhist order on several occasions during 1937 with a view to modernizing it so as to improve the teaching it disseminated to the people. *The Nation* (December 19, 1936), for example, reported that one representative asked that educated monks be sent out on extended speaking tours in the rural areas – a request that in fact anticipated the *thammathud* missionary program of the 1970s.

The major thrust of lay propagation of religion was in schools. As the monk's teaching role in schools diminished, the lay religious teacher in schools made an increasing appearance. This was the age when formal instruction in religion became part of the curriculum of schools. The Department of Education even went so far as to change its name from *Suksati-Karn* to *Dharma-Karn*, and the names of its provincial and district officers likewise – possibly a self-conscious return to a traditional label since Ayutthayan times for the department that administered religious affairs. Whether intended or not, it also reminds us of the famous King Asoka's edicts proclaiming that the business of the state is to implement dharma (morality and righteousness) and appointing for that purpose morality officers called *dharmamahamatras*.[6] Laymen's zeal also tended to the dissemination of religion to the people at large, and as part of this popularization they agitated for vernacular canons that would make available to those who cannot read Pali the teaching of pristine Hinayana Buddhism.

Finally, we must make a passing reference to an abortive attempt at missionary activity. Both monks and laymen, looking back to the idealized

[6] "I have appointed morality officers, they are engaged with votaries of all faiths, for the firm establishment of morality, for its progress, for the happiness here and hereafter of those devoted to morality" (Asoka Rock Edict V).

Asokan days of missionary zeal, were conscious that that kind of missionary activity was at a standstill in Thailand. It is in this context that we must view the expedition of 64 Thai monks to Rome in 1934, organized by an Italian monk called Phra Lokanat, for the purpose of engaging in missionary work – an escapade that predictably foundered.

A movement that has as its objective the making of Buddhist doctrine relevant to the layman's life in this world must necessarily attempt an interpretation of the central tenets of the faith. And a central concept that attracts and invites exegetical commentary is nirvana. Landon reports that running through the month of May 1933 there were discussions in *The Nation* relating to it:

> The idea of nirvana as a state which the righteous attain after death is objectionable to many people. Nirvana is defined as the highest good, the highest ethic of Buddhism. The usual definition is that nirvana means the annihilation of the whole being. Material existence is snuffed out like a flame. The explanation offered by the articles in the *Nation* is that Buddha was teaching annihilation of his evil passions and not of himself or anybody else. Complete control of passion and desire was his goal. How can one attain to nirvana while yet alive if nirvana means physical annihilation? Yet Buddha attained nirvana before his death. This could seem to demonstrate that nirvana is something other than physical annihilation; is something attainable during earthly existence (p. 229).

Those of us who hold a particularly narrow conception of nirvana, perhaps misled by certain prominent commentators, may react to the foregoing interpretation of nirvana as essentially standing for the annihilation of passion and self-interested desire, and for the sense of tranquillity from detached action that results from it while being alive, as a tendentious, self-serving distortion or reformist reinterpretation. But we have amply demonstrated that even in terms of the West's best scholarship on Buddhism, nirvana's meanings are many and varied, and therefore the views of the Thai commentators cited previously cannot simply be pronounced as inaccurate because they are wedded to the interests and perspectives of the thirties.

As an inquiry into intellectual history, the positions of the scholars examined by Welbon (1968) could no doubt be plotted in terms of their methodological perspectives, their intellectual training and biases, and their social and cultural milieus. My interest in this book is not to decide on questions of original truth but to explore the meaning that concepts such as karma, nirvana, *samsara*, dharma, and so on, have for certain practicing Thai Buddhists today. Whereas for the Western scholars previously cited the concern with these concepts was not merely a matter of scholarship but also one of their collision with humanistic or liberal concepts that they held as heirs to a Judaeo-Christian civilization, for modern Thai interpreters these concepts are, over and above their correct understanding, a matter of direct practical relevance in that they illuminate the nature of

the world around us and how we are to live in it. Thus it should not surprise us that, at this moment in Thailand – when there is an educational explosion, economic expansion, heightened activity by the government under the banner of national development, and, at the same time, political restraints felt both internally and externally – practicing Buddhists should seek to formulate canons for action in this world in terms of the central concepts of their religion through which they understand the problems of existence. If in the 1930s it was the educated laymen who took the lead in interpreting the Buddhist ethic, today it is the *bhikkhu* of rural peasant origins who commands the stage. The 1930s voiced certain intellectual and moral canons that are now coming to fruition in the 1970s. In this process we incidentally also witness both the affirmations and revisions by Thai Buddhists of certain interpretations that Western scholars have imputed to their religion.

The Ethic of the Contemporary Elite Monks

Let us begin with some of the ideas of Thailand's most renowned religious thinker – Buddhadasa Bhikkhu – who is famous for his sermons, writings, and religious practices and for his meditation center called Suan Mokh (the Park of Liberation), situated in southern Thailand.

Buddhadasa (though influenced by Zen Buddhism) is scrupulously and rigorously orthodox in one respect: The objective of the Buddhist quest, as he never tires of telling us, is "complete freedom from selfhood" (*anatta*), the attainment of "emptiness" (*sunnata*), which is beyond both good and bad action (karma). "To train oneself not to cling to anything with the feeling of 'I' or 'mine,' that is the highest system of spiritual culture" (1969, pp. 32–33). Or again, there is no doubt in his mind that there is a hierarchy of Buddhist practices and vocations in which the householder's preoccupations rank low, as may be gleaned from his vigorous citation from the canonical texts[7] that the "core of Brahmacariya, the holy life is emancipation, *vimutti*, which is the same as salvation; wisdom (*paññā*) is the sapwood surrounding the path, morality (*sila*) is the outermost dry rind, and finally gain, honour, name and fame and even heaven are but the fallen sere leaves" (p. 30).

Buddhadasa's interpretations are compelling because they stem from one basic thrust, which is that for the Buddhist quest it is the world *here and now* that is relevant. This basic point has many ramifications and resonances: It calls for action here and now as being productive, it "interiorizes" inside man's mind the Buddhist cosmology by declaring that heavens and hells, rebirth (*samsara*) and liberation (nirvana), are not outside us as events or places but inside us as internal states and experiences. Central to this exposition is the flat assertion that the language of the common man is misleading and vastly different from the language of the dhamma.

[7] See the *Mahāsāropama Sutta*, Mūlapannasa, Majhima-Nikaya.

Thus the ordinary man conceives the four woeful states (*apaya*) realistically and materially as outside him, attained after death, as hell (*naraka*), as the realms of beasts, of the hungry ghosts (*peta*), and the frightened ghosts (*asura*). But in dhammic language the woeful states are experienced here and now: "The hungry ghosts of Dhamma language are purely mental states. Ambition based on craving, worry based on craving – to be afflicted with these is to be born a hungry ghost." "If one is afraid, one is simultaneously born an asura" (Buddhadasa 1967). "Whenever greed, anger and delusion cause us to be excited and heated, then we become creatures in the hell-like samsara" (Buddhadasa 1970).

Again, now dealing with the paired concepts of heaven and hell, he declares that while in everyday language they are realms outside to be attained after death, "the heaven and hell of Dhamma language are to be found in the mind and may be attained any time at all depending on one's mental make-up" (pp. 23–24).

Moving even more daringly, Buddhadasa (1971*b*) does the same thing with the concept of nirvana. Expounding that there are different levels of nirvana, he says: "Nirvana is attained at any moment that the mind becomes free from compounding. Freedom from compounding, at any moment, is nirvana. Permanent cessation of compounding is full nirvana." Compounding means grasping and clinging with attachment. And, finally, he pushes this insight to the ultimate limit when in a lecture (1970) titled "In Samsara Exists Nibbana" he postulates the contemporariness of *samsara* and nibbana thus: ". . . since there exists both suffering and the cessation of suffering within our living body, it is inevitable (that) the whirlpool of samsara and nibbana are there; and the Lord Buddha has already declared the truth."

All these ideas are forcefully brought together and deployed by Buddhadasa in the lectures he gave to the Thailand (Christian) Theological Seminary in Chiangmai in 1967 and later published under the title *Christianity and Buddhism* (1968). This book is in some ways large-hearted and magnanimous toward Christianity and its missionaries. In it the author makes an intentional attempt at translating many Christian concepts into Buddhist concepts, in the course of which he sometimes turns the tables on Christianity, subjecting it to the same selective literal interpretations that Christian commentators have often in the past adopted toward Buddhism. For us it is not so much this translation between religions that is important as Buddhadasa's adumbration of what he considers the central tenets of Buddhism as a way of life. To enumerate some of the assertions in the book bearing on this theme:

1. In a comparative vein Buddhadasa asserts: "Buddhism tends to be 'paññadhika,' the path with the wisdom-factor predominant, . . . christianity tends to be 'saddhadhika,' the path where trust or faith predominates, and Islam 'viriyadhika,' the path where will-power is predominant" (pp. 12–13). While suggesting that each path may be relevant in its historical time and context, he nevertheless gently chides the insufficiency of

Christianity's canonical emphasis on faith, for as Buddhism asserts "the essence of religion can only be reached by genuine practice alone." He however sees the same message of practice expressed in the New Testament itself.

2. Practice and action are what the Buddhadasa sees the Buddha and Jesus Christ representing in relation to the world. Asserting that principally all founders of religions have the sole aim of helping to make man attain a perfect world and that both Jesus and the Buddha "worked altruistically for the sake of perfecting those which could be achieved by human endeavour" (p. 3), he also reminds us of the saying attributed to the Buddha: " 'The Tathagatha, the Perfect One, appears in the world for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men' (Mahāsīhanāda Sutta Majjhima-Nikaya, 12/37/46)" (p. 2).

3. In what does the Buddha's admonitions and actions for the walfare of the many consist? Buddhadasa answers that the Buddha quite decidedly discouraged his disciples from discussing impractical problems and useless unanswerable questions (*abyākata*) such as rebirth, the limited nature or otherwise of the world, the existence and location of gods and heaven, and so on. Rather, the Buddha's message is that "One should only study that which is necessary and try to solve problems of immediate concern. One should practice to gain the highest fruit without delay" (p. 29). The Master insisted more on inquiring into the nature, origin, and mode of elimination of suffering and in teaching that when a man attains to destroying his feelings of self and selfishness, he is freed from suffering in this world:

> For here and now he is above suffering and therefore contented and satisfied; he need not enquire whether after death beings are reborn or not, where heaven is, etc., although these are age-old questions. He does not bother about these questions because the happiness which results from the destruction of the feeling and the engrained idea of self and selfishness is incomparably superior to that kind of happiness which is said to be experienced in the various heavens (p. 28).

4. Intentional action is karma, and action devoted to the extinction of suffering, of self and selfishness, includes action based on loving kindness or love (*metta*), which means giving up all and everything for others. This giving up or sacrifice (*patinissagga*) implies not so much the renunciation of action as only the fruits of action for oneself.

5. Religious practice involves the propagation of the religious teachings on the part of disciples to all the nations of the world. Buddhadasa points out that both Christianity and Buddhism are *universal religions* as deemed by their founders and cites these canonical texts in support:

> Jesus says: "Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptise men and everywhere in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28/19). As for the Buddha he uttered these words: "Go ye, O Bhik-

khus, and wander for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, in comparison for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of *gods and men.* Proclaim, O Bhikkhus, the Doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure" (Mahavagga, Vinaya-Pitaka 4/39/32) (p. 57).[8]

Buddhadasa also directs our attention to the fact that the Buddha stressed "the necessity of spreading the Dhamma by sending his first sixty disciples (each in a separate direction) to preach" a few months after he reached enlightenment.

I shall later refer to Buddhadasa's elucidation of the concept of dhamma, which together with its Hindu counterpart concept of dharma constitutes, as we shall see, a global doctrine that has been considered by practicing Buddhists and Hindus as being amenable to interpretation and reformulation in a manner suitable to our time.

What Buddhadasa's ideas forcefully refute and deny is the fatalism, the postponement of action, the unreality of this world and therefore apathy toward it attributed to Buddhism by certain stereotype commentators. He is in fact saying that the world here and now, our own present time, our experienced mental states – these comprise the stage for urgent and immediate action in the form of Buddhist practice. Perhaps an even more important ideological assertion on his part is that the quest for nirvana does not mean abnegation and renunciation of action in this world: The ideal is that men should act in this world with *metta,* with loving kindness and compassion, not for his own selfish gain but for the collective good.

Finally, it is clear that many Thai scholar-monks agree with Buddhadasa in totally rejecting the view that Buddhism is pessimistic and misanthropic because it stands for a devaluation of this world. To substantiate this Phra Maha Sathienpong Punnavanno[9] argues that precisely because Buddhism is timeless, it is relevant to the present (rather than to future births). He writes: "Let us notice the term timeless is relevant to the present (*akaliko*) as used here. This means that the true bliss of the teaching can be attained and realized 'here and now' through one's own integrity and energetic practice, not in some hypothetical after-death state." He later goes on to argue that the Buddhist notion that all conditioned things imply suffering does not mean that all things are evil. "Thus, perhaps as a result of misinterpretation of the canonical texts there arises the misunderstanding that Buddhism is pessimistic and views the world as entirely evil. . . ."

A translation from this position to an even more activistic orientation

[8] Let us note the significance of this teaching for those in Thailand today concerned with the relevance of Buddhism for contemporary life: We shall later see how frequently contemporary Thai Buddhists – both monks and laymen – who favor a more active role for monks in modern life – refer to these same textual references as an ideological charter.

[9] P. M. Sathienpong is a monk who resided in 1971 in Wat Thongnopakhun, Thonburi. He passed the highest Pali examination (*prayog* 9) when a novice and subsequently read Sanskrit for the B.A. degree at Cambridge University. (See biographical details in Tambiah 1968.)

to the world is provided by various scholar-monks concerned with the provision of higher religious cum secular education for monks. Their main aim is that monks should recover their educational roles in society, which they have lost in modern times. It is argued that monks, by virtue of being disinterested persons who have renounced politics and property, can provide effective leadership not only in the practice of morality but also in stimulating social and economic development.

There are quite a few such vigorous scholar-monks and educational administrators in Bangkok who have preserved themselves from total involvement with the performance of religious merit rituals or with the pursuit of ecclesiastical titles and office so that they may direct their energies to activities they think worthwhile. I shall take as my example Phra Sri Wisudhimoli (previously Phra Prayudh Payutto), who was in 1971 assistant secretary general of Mahachulalongkorn University.[10]

Phra Sri's views on the need for monks to play a positive role in modern society rest on the basic proposition that since monks are materially dependent on the laity, they have a duty to make a return. He argues that there is doctrinal basis for this idea because the Buddha is supposed to have said: "The monks should always reflect that our existence depends on the other people."[11] Traditionally, the service rendered by monks to society was not only helping laymen to free themselves from suffering by the practice of kindness and mercy but was also related to the imparting of education in monastery schools. This role, which has been lost in recent times, must be recovered, argues Phra Sri.

Phra Sri says that in the past 70–80 years, the monks have lost their previous roles and status as a result of the impact of Western civilization and the modernization of Thailand. Secular schools, hospitals, courts of law, recreational facilities – all took away the previous functions of the wat. Equally disastrous was the monks' recalcitrance to accept change and to familiarize themselves with the new circumstances. The result was the alienation of lay society from monks, who were considered intellectually old fashioned and found wanting in relation to the new prestigious knowledge. The monks' traditional *pariyattitham* studies and their system of knowledge were felt to be useless for daily life. Nevertheless, there was a time even during this period of Western impact when King Chulalongkorn entrusted elementary education to monks and also established for them two institutions of higher learning. But in the long run secular schools replaced wat schools.[12]

[10] Some of his ideas are stated in these two essays: "Problems, Status, Duties of the Sangha in Modern Society" (1968) and "Monks' Roles in Contemporary Thai Society" (1970).

[11] See the *Khuddaka Nikaya*. Other references cited are the *Sigalavoda Sutta*, in which monks and laymen are exhorted to render service to each other, and also the *Bahukara Sutta* and the *Anguttara Nikaya*.

[12] The historical facts are as we saw in Chapter 11 more complex. In the 1890s, the princely monk Wachirayan and the minister of interior, Prince Damrong, initiated a program of extending elementary education in the provinces and rural areas through monastic schools. This program was actively promoted for some years, but subsequently

It is rightly emphasized by Phra Sri that today when so many of the young monks are strongly disposed to pursue knowledge, the problem is scarcely that of motivating them to learn but of giving them sufficient and adequate education. Continuing the traditional ecclesiastical education in the dhamma and the Pali language would not suffice either, because there is a heavy demand for supplementation by secular subjects. The monks and novices of today most definitely want to learn *than wichalog* (worldly subjects). It is the realization of this need by active scholar-monks and educators that explains the enthusiastic functioning (despite inadequate finance and facilities) of the two universities for monks (Mahachulalongkorn and Mahamakut), of teacher-training institutions (as, for example, the one run for monks at Wat Sam Praya), of many wat-run adult schools in Bangkok and Thonburi imparting secondary secular education to monks and novices, perhaps the most famous being those located at Wat Pho and Wat Traimit. The same spirit is behind Phra Kittiwutto's experimental Chittapavan School for novices located near Chonburi.

There is a keen appreciation among the monks themselves that the gradual decrease in numbers being ordained as regular novices and monks (i.e., for a longer period than merely one *phansa*, or Lent) and the increasing tendency for educated monks and novices to disrobe and enter lay society can be stemmed only by the twofold policy (1) of making monastic education varied, relevant, and interesting – by including worldly subjects – and (2) of assigning active roles to educated monks so that they can find fulfillment.

In the light of this we can appreciate another of Phra Sri's basic propositions – that it is "the duty of a monk to study and practice." According to him this principle entails for the monk three kinds of transactions with laymen:

1. The imparting of education (*kaan suksa*): Monks can recover their educational role better by combining with the mastery of dhamma the learning of secular subjects, especially since *expanding scientific knowledge does not in any way affect the truth of Buddhist principles.*
2. The propagation of dhamma (*kaan poey pa*) and its practice to the people at large.
3. The rendering of assistance (*kaan soeng kraw*) with a pure mind.

This includes spiritual assistance such as giving moral advice relating to life's problems, performing rituals thereby giving laymen moral support, and, finally, providing advice and leadership in social welfare and development work in rural areas.

Thus through these activities it is hoped that monks will recover their

the ecclesiastical heads, especially Wachirayan, wanted the government to take over the program because the burden was heavy, because the sangha was becoming bureaucratized, and because the monasteries were not in the long run the best purveyors of universal primary education of a secular nature.

traditional roles. They are, it is claimed, especially suited to educate and to stimulate development precisely because they have renounced politics and are not concerned with interfering in administrative matters. Moreover, having also renounced private property, monks become inexpensive extension agents to employ, for their personal needs are simple and the time available to them ample.

Keeping in mind Phra Sri's interpretation of the prescription that it is "the duty of a monk to study and practice" to be important, I visited a young scholar-monk whom I knew well to seek out his understanding of it. I report here the gist of two conversations I had with him on this matter:

August 5, 1971

He said that the proposition includes both activities – *kantha thura,* which implies that the monk engages his intellect in studies, and *wiphasana thura* or *kammathan,* which implies the "practice" of meditation. Thereafter and subsequent to their mastery of both disciplines, it is the duty of the monk to impart his knowledge and experience to laymen.

The concepts of study and practice, he continued, imply a monk's positive involvement with the laity. There is nothing wrong with a monk's teaching laymen morality and ethical principles as well as motivating them to achieve better standards of life, provided the pursuit of the latter does not involve him in immoral activities.

When I expressed my difficulty in understanding how the Buddhist concept of "detachment" can be meaningfully interlocked with this-worldly activity, he made the following defense: First of all, it is the business of the layman to be active in this-worldly matters; but he should be ambitious for success without being immoral, corrupt, and greedy. Secondly, one can be in the world without being of the world. While this dogma applies more to monks, yet laymen too should be able to appreciate that worldly events are contingent and impermanent. But this doctrine need not disengage one from the world. Moreover, he argued, meditation and other practices are not for monks only – laymen too can practice them. Time can be found and provision can be made for laymen to practice meditation. For example, a busy taxi driver who drives a car from morn till night cannot of course practice meditation daily; what he should strive to do is to set apart two weeks or so in a year for meditational practice. Others may have jobs that allow them to practice meditation for brief periods daily before or after work.

August 10, 1971

One of the topics I discussed with this same monk today was the role of monks in society.

The monk's prime duty he said is to liberate himself, and this necessarily implies his detachment from society. But the Buddha also directed monks to be compassionate and to instruct laymen. This activity is not compulsory, but it is good that a monk should be compassionate. If a monk totally retreats from people, they will say that he is selfish. The present-day arrangement is that a monk is materially dependent on the laity; he should therefore make some return. The complaint is sometimes leveled that a monk who devotes himself

fully to the practice of meditation is selfish; that a monk who is concerned with his liberation alone is not useful to society.

Truly, he said, the problem faced by a monk is how he can remain detached while being in the world. In any case, he said catching me by surprise, liberation or salvation is difficult to achieve and would probably take a multitude of rebirths to attain. It is thus better for a monk to direct in the meantime his efforts partly on his own behalf and partly on behalf of society.

Theravada Buddhism, which is stricter in its interpretation, says that one should accomplish one's own spiritual development before one can teach others, while Mahayana Buddhism, which is more compassionate, says that monks should teach society. When I jokingly asked whether his approval of such Mahayanist ideas is not "heretical," he demolished me with the retort: "Why cling to labels . . . you should choose the greater truth." He finally concluded with the argument that many other monks have used in conversations with me: The Buddha himself exhorted monks to teach laymen, and he cited the same doctrinal reference that I have already cited elsewhere.

During the course of these conversations with scholar-monks relating to what the monk's orientation to contemporary society should be, I became aware of the necessity to probe how the accent on learning (*kantha thura*) and thereafter teaching the dhamma to the world might affect the monk's practice of meditation (*wiphasana thura/kammathan*), which from classical times was recommended as part of the monk's regimen. Although there exists the traditional distinction between forest-dwelling meditating monks (*arannavasi*) and town or village-dwelling "learning-oriented" and ministering monks (*gramavasi*), it is clear that in theory the latter too were and are meant to engage in the spiritual exercise of meditation. For instance, in the Sinhalese case the Dambadeni Katikavata, the regulations relating to the sangha, promulgated by King Parakrama Bahu II (A.D. 1236–1270) together with the chief of the sangha (*mahasvami*) in the thirteenth century A.D., says that a monk after undergoing the higher ordination should as part of his training under the direction of his ordainer and teacher (*upadhyaya* and *achariya*) "be made to engage himself diligently in Grantha and Vidarsanadhuras and thus brought up in a manner that would contribute to the preservation of the Buddha-sasana in the future."[13] Even more eloquently, the Maha Parakramabahu Katikavata promulgated by the illustrious preceding king, Parakramabahu I (A.D. 1153–1186), with the assistance of the "great (*bhikkhu*) elder" Dimbulagala Maha-Kasyapa, stipulates:

> those engaged in Grantha-dhura should always fulfill the functions of solitude (*viveka-vat*), they should mould their ways of deportment perfectly and their character absolutely without blemish in all three divisions of the day. Engrossed in meditation (*kamatahan*) such as the impermanence of the body which should be done two or three times a day in the cross-legged posture they should cultivate functions of solitude day by day without interruption.

[13] See Ratnapala (1971), pp. 142, 148.

I cite the Sinhalese evidence because, as I have stressed many times before, it is the Sinhalese Buddhism of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that is alleged to have influenced heavily the character of early Thai Buddhism, which in conjunction with nascent Thai kingdoms took shape in northern Thailand in the thirteenth century.

I do not wish here to describe in any detail the number and range of wat in Thailand today that specialize in meditation (*kammathan wat*) today, but the following few remarks are intended to provide some context for understanding the orientations of scholar-monks on the subject of meditation. Certainly today the practice of meditation is by no means a compulsory part of the training of monks and novices as is, for instance, their having to memorize chants or attend *pariyattitham* schools to learn dhamma (which in practice means learning to pass the *naktham* and *parian* examinations).

The vast majority of rural and urban wat do not teach meditation, and, therefore, the monks and novices do not practice it either. But, nevertheless, there are certain wat distributed in towns and rural areas that "specialize" in meditation in the sense that they may have a long tradition of meditation transmitted from teacher to pupil, so that the wat in question becomes a center of attraction for those who want to learn and practice meditation. Or the wat may have an individual monk who is known to be a practitioner and a teacher and who attracts pupils from both within his wat and other wat, pupils who constitute a personal following. Such wat conduct the normal activities of other wat, and all their inmates do not necessarily practice meditation. Meditation is only a part-time activity. Furthermore, these wat, particularly those situated in urban areas, have lay pupils, mostly elderly people. Especially women who become interested in meditation may become "nuns" for varying periods of time and reside at the wat. There are, however, a few genuine forest hermitages, composed of a limited number of monks, novices, and nuns who devote themselves primarily to meditation in the classic tradition of *arannavasi* and who in pursuance of the contemplative life have minimal transactions with the laity.

Although the teaching and the practice of meditation among the religious and the laity are as I have suggested in Chapter 12 a vehicle for stimulating piety, a way of teaching a form of dhamma to the public and of forming a personal following and even initiating a religious movement in the wider society, by and large the young novices and monks gravitating toward the capital city conceive themselves as primarily *kantha thura* in search of learning (see Appendix to Chapter 18 on the monks' universities).

Hence I made some effort to inquire into the views of teachers and pupils at Thailand's premier university for monks – Mahachulalongkorn University. The following views were expressed by this university's possibly most active and able administrator and teacher when I asked him to comment on the relevance of meditation in the training of his students

and, secondly, the implications of the meditative life for relations with society.

Thai monks, he said, generally associate the practice of meditation with forest-dwelling monks (*vanavasi, arannavasi*). But this need not be the case, although we do not often hear of young monks practicing meditation, only of old monks.

In modern times the practice of meditation and the practice of learning need not be exclusive pursuits. "At Mahachula University," he said, "we like to train our young monks in both learning and meditation." Although it is true that the students spend most of their time learning books, they are also instructed in meditation for one hour per week for two semesters. In addition, there is a meditation room provided for their use whenever they feel inclined.

It is not necessary to withdraw from society in order to practice, or while practicing, meditation. It is appropriate for a monk to withdraw for a period of time in order to practice earnestly, after which time the adept can reengage with society in order to teach the discipline. The duration of the retreat depends on the preference and need of the individual monk concerned.

When a monk has engaged in serious meditation, it is left to him to decide whether he wants to live away from society or not. In Buddha's time Maha Kassapa did not care for society or for sangha administrative work; nevertheless, he did assume the responsibility of caring for young monks undergoing training under him. In contrast, Sariputta and Moggalana nearly always lived and worked near towns. They traveled and taught people; they were actively engaged in sangha administration as well as in instructing laymen.

In Buddha's time, the forest-dwelling monks were fewer in number than village and town-dwelling monks, just as at present. Also, it is relevant to remember that forest dwellers could not entirely cut themselves off from society – because they had to live near human settlements to collect alms and to subsist. Monks who were town dwelling have always cared for the welfare of the wider society in which they lived, while forest dwellers have at least been interested in the welfare of the monks they lived with and also in the welfare of laymen who lived nearby and materially supported them. Indeed, it would be difficult for monks to accept food and gifts from laymen without providing in return at least spiritual guidance and advice. It is the duty of the monk to teach dhamma to the people; and according to the *phra vinai* it is impossible for monks to live wholly separate from society, because they must receive alms from it.

The 324 monk-students of Mahachulalongkorn University who comprised the sample of my survey were asked to give their views on two issues that aid us further in understanding the orientations of ambitious young monks.

Table 17.1 gives their responses to the question: In your view what should be the role of monks in modern society? The question was open-ended, and I have grouped the diverse answers into four ad hoc classes. It is clear that the vast majority of monks (75.9% falling into categories 2 and 4) favored active engagement with society in the traditionally acceptable role of preachers of morality and teachers of knowledge; perhaps even more interestingly 45.6 percent of the respondents (falling into classes 3 and 4) were in favor of participation in programs for national and com-

Table 17.1. *Attitudes of monk-students at Mahachulalongkorn University to the role of monks in modern society*

Attitudes	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
1. Monks should pursue their own study and religious practice and be an example without active involvement with society.	7	2.2
2. Monks should be concerned with society primarily in their religious role as monks: teach religion, morals, good behavior to people; engage in educational activity; promote happiness of people and act as leaders of religion and traditional culture.	150	46.3
3. Monks should actively engage in tasks for the improvement of society (such as the promotion of physical, social, and political welfare, community development, and relief of poverty).	52	16.0
4. Classes 2 and 3 above	96	29.6
5. Other responses	19	5.9
	324	100

Source: Author's survey, 1971.

munity development that traditionally fall outside their religious role. In striking contrast is the fact that the contemplative life of the recluse was favored by only 2.2 percent.

Table 17.2 tabulates the responses of the monk-students to the question: Is it more important for a monk to practice learning or meditation (*kantha thura* or *wiphasana thura*)? Although the question was posed as a choice between learning and meditation with regard to importance, the respondents preferred not to make a choice but wrote in a variety of answers. Very few (4.6%) declared meditation to be an unimportant activity or learning to be more important than meditation (5.7%). While about one-fourth made the relevant comment that meditation is only rewarding if combined with study, many more (54.9) simply listed the virtues of meditation as producing valued states of mind or as generating respect among the laity.

Thus taking both tables into account (and extrapolating from other evidence) it seems to be the case that while these young scholar-monks personally prefer to put their efforts into the learning of books and thereafter to take an active role in society, and although they reject the life of the contemplative recluse for themselves, they do not dismiss the importance of meditation for the monk's vocation. Since the religious literature that they read frequently emphasizes the disciplinary virtues of meditation, it would be unthinkable for them to disparage or devalue it.

It is of course possible that the monks who are actually seriously con-

Table 17.2 *Opinions of monk-students at Mahachulalongkorn University on importance of learning versus meditation*

Opinions	Responses	
	Number	Percent
1. Learning more important than meditation.	19	5.9
2. Meditation is fairly (or partly) important only if combined with study; practice without study is useless.	90	27.8
3. Lay people respect monks if they meditate, teach people to meditate, set good example, and so on.	84	25.9
4. Meditation produces calmness of mind, peace, and happiness.	66	20.4
Meditation removes worry, lust, and desires, bad emotional states, anger, and prejudice.	23	7.1
Meditation produces concentration of mind, self-awareness; it provides mental training; leads to truth, to right action, and so on.	5	1.5
5. Meditation is unimportant.	15	4.6
6. Other	3	0.9
7. n.a.	19	5.9
	324	100

Source: Author's survey, 1971.

cerned with the practice of meditation as their main vocation and, more relevantly, monks who are enthusiastic about propagating the meditation discipline to the public at large would be hostile to the new activism of those monks who wish to promote national development.

A treatise by a Thai monk on meditation that otherwise affirms the here-and-now relevance of Buddhist practice and even refers to five kinds of joy as the benefits of *wiphasana*, contains, however, a passage on monks, "being seized by human and non-humans," which could well form the kernel of criticism of an overly enthusiastic ideology of monks' involvement in modern society:

> When a monk lives in close association with lay folk, and if he shares with them his sorrows, happiness and so on, he would feel happy with those who are happy, and sorrowful with those who suffer. He would get involved in the world of business and society. Such a monk is called "being seized by humans."[14]

But I have not heard any monk criticize monks' current involvement in *thammathud* (missionary) or community development (*patana*) activity in quite this form. Indeed, the current temper among Bangkok monks is not one that spontaneously produces any criticism. However, there was one very distinguished and elderly monk, who himself had been one of

[14] Dhammasudhi (1968), p. 137.

Thailand's great promoters of meditation practice among both monks and laymen in the recent past, who made to me the following criticism in unusually forthright terms:

> Buddhism is concerned with the mental and the spiritual development of man, not with his material prosperity. The real task for all humans is to understand the *impermanence* of all things and events, and this can be achieved only through the practice of meditation. The monks who advocate community development are in fact half-monks – half-laymen – for Buddhism should stay apart from material development. This is not the monk's province.

But to match this exceptional monk's criticism I must report the statement of another monk who is representative of a not insignificant (numerically) category of monks; he was old and was living in virtual retirement when I spoke to him (1971) and was not directly involved in the new ideological currents. This monk, aged 70, is the deputy abbot of a wat in the capital. The title carries few duties. He has been in robes for some 50 years. He is by no means a scholar, having passed only the first *parian* grade (*prayog* 3). Nevertheless, he has maturity of experience and is also an amateurish practitioner of meditation. He was not fully familiar with recent action programs initiated by monks, as, for example, the *thammathud* program, yet his views were decisively positive and on the side of monks' engagement with rather than contemplative withdrawal from the world. He said that the purpose of the *thammathud* program was to teach laymen morality and ethics. Although he did not know the details of the community development effort, he approved it because people should have good health before they can assiduously practice religion. The *sasana* (religion) does not forbid (*mai haam*) monks from being active. It is, according to this monk, an essential part of the religion that people should live well and be happy, but according to the moral law.

On Dharma in the Modern World

In a sense this discussion on the contemporary conception of dharma marks our having completed a full cycle and arrived at the point at which this book began with the classical Hindu and Buddhist notions of dharma.

It would seem that dharma is a global concept that simultaneously encodes many polarities, thereby constituting a usage that, as Conze says, is "ambiguous and multivalent" (1970, p. 92). Both in contemporary Buddhism and Hinduism dharma is being interpreted dynamically to relate to modern events and concerns and to bring them under the umbrella of eternal law. This duality of dharma's flexibility and yet anchorage to a point of reference is vital for its serviceableness in doctrinal and ideological formulations.

Let us begin with Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's glosses on dhamma in his tract *Christianity and Buddhism* (1968). He asserts at one point (p. 67)

that the single term "dhamma" includes many notions, namely, (1) ignorance (*avijjā*), that is, the power of nature that is the cause of all existing things and as such the cause of suffering; (2) knowledge (*vijjā*) in its capacity to bring all suffering to a final end; and (3) the law of karman, which relates to the punishment and rewarding of creatures. In his explication Buddhadasa presents a list of four aspects of the all-inclusive term "dhamma":

1. and 2. Dhamma as the nature of things (*sabhāvadhamma*) and its correlated aspect as the law of nature (*saccadhamma*). Nature as thus created, Buddhadasa says, "we must respect and honour and take an interest in it in order to realize the truths of nature. . . ."

3. Dhamma as duty performed according to the law of nature (*patipatti dhamma*).

4. Dhamma as the fruits of practice or of realization.

A few pages later (pp. 74–76) Buddhadasa provides additional meanings, some redundant, some new, of dhamma:

1. (a) *Asankhata-Dhamma:* The notion of dhamma as all inclusive and omnipresent, having no birth or death, being not good or evil; there is no cause that accounts for its existence, and it has no space and has nothing to do with time.

(b) Dhamma as being unconditioned but also active – "both as something hidden in everything and as *active* in terms of the law of Karma."

2. *Sankhata-Dhamma:* Dhamma as related to the "natural phenomena of the world" such as matter, body, mind, spirit, action and result of action, which "having come into being cease to be," since they are illusory and spring from ignorance.

3. Dhamma as the teaching and recorded sayings of the Buddha.

Let us now turn to another commentator. In the course of a conversation Phra Wisudhimoli of Mahachulalongkorn University instructed me thus:

The word "dhamma" has multiple meanings. It means, depending on the context of its use, "law of cause and effect," "mental object," "teaching of the Buddha," "law," "norm," "nature," "truth," "righteousness," and "morality." It encompasses both good and bad, material and spiritual: *Kusala dhamma* or *bapa dhamma* means "evil"; *akusala dhamma* or *punya dhamma* means "good"; *sankhata dhamma* means "conditioned things"; *asankhata dhamma* means "unconditioned" or "nibbana."

Now it is clear that both these Thai commentators are quite in line with the representation of the meanings of dhamma (dharma) made by the best of Western scholars on the basis of their study of doctrinal texts.[15] That

[15] For example, Conze (1970, Ch. 7) gives seven of the most important meanings of dharma, which derives from the root *dhr*, "to uphold" and is at the base of words such as *thronos*. Briefly summarized, they are as follows:

1. In an *ontological* sense dharma could mean:
   (a) a transcendental reality that is real in absolute truth and in the ultimate sense;

matter of fit and commentarial accuracy is not at issue here. What I want to explore further are two implications that stem from this englobing and multivalent conception of dharma that give us some sense of the ontological and semantic premises of the Buddhist and Hindu orientation that make it startlingly different in some respects from the Christian one. The difference is clearly brought home to us by Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's unsuccessful attempt to translate Christian concepts and their arrangement into Buddhist terms in *Christianity and Buddhism.*

Buddhadasa makes the statement of equivalence that "In the language of Dhamma God and the Law of Karma are one and the same thing" (p. 32) and then, having surveyed the multivalent meanings of dhamma, makes the further equivalences that dhamma as the law of nature is God, dhamma as duty is religion as a system of practice, and dhamma as the fruits of practice or of realization (cessation) equals Christian salvation and "thanksgiving for the grace of God." This translation leads Buddhadasa to arrive at a conclusion that makes nonsense of certain Christian formulations precisely because the Buddhists cut the ontological cake differently:

> Buddhists hold that the Dhamma implies everything and that God being perfect also implies everything. This is because Dhamma and God are one and the same thing. Buddhists also hold that the so-called devil or Satan is included in the world "Dhamma" or God, because if God had not created Satan what could have created him? The devil or Satan is nothing else but a test of man by God (p. 71).

Thus what we have here is the Buddhist-Hindu incomprehension of the Christian irreconcilable dichotomies of God and Satan, hell and heaven, salvation and alienation as permanent mutually exclusive categories from the viewpoint of dharma that encompasses and at the same time *relativizes* them in a cosmology. Dharma, in being a total unity, is thereby unconditioned and beyond good and bad, and, in being internally differentiated, accepts the conditioned heaven and hell, virtue and demerit, man, god, and beast, nature and culture as inevitable but *hierarchized* constituents of the same scheme.

It is precisely this totalization, relativization, and hierarchization that closely converge with another implication to make the concept of dharma a semantic scheme with which events are understood as well as initiated

(b) the order of law of the universe, immanent, eternal, uncreated;
(c) a "truly real event" implying objective truth;
(d) objective data whether dharmically true or untrue, for example, mental objects or percepts, which are the supports of the mind;
(e) characteristic, quality, property, attribute, which follow the law and are its products.

2. As reflected in the conduct of life, dharma means the moral law, righteousness, virtue, right behavior and practices.

3. The dharmic facts of 1 and 2 previously as interpreted in the Buddha's teaching; dharma here means "doctrine," "scripture," "truth." The true dharma is teaching (*agama*) and practice (*adhigama*). *Dharmadana* = gift of the *dharma; dharmaraja* = king of the doctrine, righteous king.

in contemporary times. This additional implication is that although dharma is the eternal law of the universe, it also has different historical manifestations according to time and context.[16] Lingat (1950) has drawn our attention to the apparent contradiction between the eternal nature of dharma law and the progressive decline of man contained in the theory of a succession of *yugas* (ages) and explained how it was dissolved in the higher truth that this succession of ages is ultimately delusory.[17] But today as ideologists and commentators and sponsors of action programs face the tasks of their time, it is not dharma's timelessness so much as its creative relativity that serves as a lever and handle.

The Hindu metaphor of the four-footed bull of dharma that in each age progressively loses a foot is well known. "Austerities [*tapas*] constitute the highest dharma in the Krita age; in the Treta age, sacred knowledge is declared to be the highest dharma; in the Dvapara they speak of the performance of sacrifice as the highest dharma; giving alone is the highest dharma in the Kali age" (*Manu Smrti* 1.81–86). This doctrine of the Hindu *shastras* is matched by the Buddhist prophecy of decline that the dhamma (according to the Haimavata sect) is doomed to vanish after 500 years, which period is divided into spans of 100 years during which there first prevails release (*vimoksa*), then concentration (*samadhi*), observance of precepts (*siladhavia*), erudition (*bahusruta*), and lastly gift (*dana*) (Lingat 1950, p. 12).[18]

It is not so much the fact of decline but of the appropriateness of "giving" to current times that is appreciated as we saw in the statements of elite monks who emphasize the duty of the monks to "give to the people at large, to give and act with a spirit of detachment, to help form a society in which the *dhamma* can serve as the upholder and support in the present time of stress, change and development."

Singer's study (1972) of the Madras industrialists illustrates how the multivalent meanings of dharma are creatively used in the great Hindu tradition as it modernizes. We see these industrialists interpreting the essentials of Hinduism to suit an age of action and change:

In an industrial context, the doctrine of doing one's moral duty (*dharma*) is

[16] "The concept of dharma is all comprehensive and may be, broadly speaking, said to comprise precepts which aim at securing the material and spiritual sustenance and growth of the individual and society. Another significant characteristic of dharma which deserves to be specially noted is that it was regarded as not being static. The context of dharma often changed in the changing contexts of time, place, and social environment" (de Bary 1958, Vol. 1, p. 213).

[17] "The dharma, through its atemporal nature is immune to the changes of the ages. The norms it propounds are valid for all time. The succession of the *yugas* is but a delusion" (Lingat 1950).

[18] Buddhagosa in the fifth century extended the duration to 5000 years and foresaw the five successive steps of retrogression at intervals of a thousand years: first, the disappearance of the acquisition of the degrees of sanctity, then of the observance of precepts, of the knowledge of the scriptures, of the exterior signs of religion, and, lastly, of the corporeal relics of the Master, which would be gathered together and cremated at Bodhgaya (Coedès 1957).

also being reinterpreted. Practically every one of these men looked on his work in industry as a moral duty and as a necessary contribution to the good of India and the world, as well as to himself and his family. This view is similar to Gandhi's reinterpretation of the *Bhagavadgita* as calling for a different kind of sacrifice in each age; in ours, the needed sacrifice is "body labour." Some of the industrialists were familiar with the Gandhian interpretation; others simply had a strong sense of the urgency and appropriateness of industrial production at this stage of India's development to provide jobs and a higher standard of living. . . . Several others had been confirmed in their industrial interpretations of their dharma by the heads of their *nathas* and by their gurus who assimilate the industrial vocation to the Vaisya's role in the traditional varna scheme.[19]

Commenting that these industrialists see progress in the world as real and their industrial leadership as a moral duty (dharma) that needs to be urgently discharged in the present age, Singer continues:

They see their own success in such a career as a combined outcome of their past actions or *karman*, God's grace or God's will, and their own effort, intelligence, and luck. . . . Although industry may be only a tiny "corridor" in the cycles of the ages (*yugas*) and may be illusory (*maya*) compared to ultimate reality, industrial life is an unavoidably present, progressively changing reality, with a greater potential for improving human welfare than agriculture had by itself (p. 340).

Some Reflections

Mulling over the ideological formulations of the Thai monks that I have reported – most of them monks who are educated, dedicated to their vocation, relatively young but of the same rural social origins as all other monks – I have arrived at the following tentative inferences, some of which will achieve a greater solidity in later chapters:

1. The message being disseminated that the sangha should play a positive role in society, that an orthodox practicing Buddhist – even though a monk – can act in this world in the spirit of self-conquest, detachment, and compassion is as it stands perhaps no more oblique in its possible impact on conduct than the so-called Protestant ethic, which exhorted a this-worldly asceticism.

2. A remarkable implication of the current dogma is the apparent narrowing of the traditional monk-laity gap, in *both directions*, a phenomenon we may associate with revitalization and reformism. The monks by virtue of being admonished to concern themselves with the material and spiritual needs of the society become in some respects like laymen. The laymen, in turn, by studying canonical texts and making their own com-

[19] Singer indicates that at least two religious heads of Sankara *nathas* (one resident at Kanci and the other at Srngeri) had explicitly supported the industrial leaders in the belief that they were performing their moral duty (dharma) and that one can be a good industrialist and a good Hindu, even a good brahman, at the same time (p. 341).

mentaries upon them, by practicing meditation and certain other aspects of the monks' technology and discipline, become more like monks. However, this interpretation of their traditional domains of concern does not imply a blurring of roles, only an intensification of religious concerns in a period of revitalization.

3. Now the preceding two trends also generate the scripturalist puritanical attitude of deprecation, if not denunciation, of popular rituals and ceremonials – to ensure prosperity and good health and to dispel misfortune – as obstacles to salvation. This orientation, which we saw occur in the Mongkut era and again in the 1930s, is once more a feature of the present-day monk-ideologists, who express a devaluation, if not a slight contempt, for the ordinary layman's requesting and the majority of monks' performing prosperity-inducing ritual acts. As one monk put it, no doubt harking back with fidelity to canonical prescription, "the way of deliverance lies within man's reach. No priest nor any external power can deliver a man."

We see here the familiar reformist attitude that the "word" takes precedence over "ritual act" (only later in turn to generate its own cult) and the accompanying assertion that a gap separates the true interiorized view held by the prophet or philosopher-monk from the fallacious exteriorized beliefs of the ordinary peasant. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, for instance, untiringly repeats the distinction between the profound language of dhamma and the misguided "language of ordinary people." But such a bifurcation represents not so much a polemic advanced to produce a rupture of the social fabric as an inspirational incitement to a regenerated life.

From a comparative point of view it seems relevant that I comment on the applicability of some of Geertz's assertions (1968) relating to the implications of scripturalism as it has manifested itself in Islam, which he observed in Indonesia and Morocco:

1. Scripturalism is said to lead to an "ideologisation of religion," which in fact represents a shift from "religiousness" to "religious-mindedness" accompanied by skepticism and a loss of spiritual self-confidence.

2. A further associated feature is the strategies scripturalism is seen as adopting in order to come to terms with science: It either takes the quarantine measures of denying metaphysical significance to science or asserts that science is already contained in religion. "In the one case, science poses no threat to faith because it is seen as religious; in the other, it poses no threat because it is seen as not" (p. 106).

3. Finally, the relationship between scripturalism and nationalism is stated as one in which nationalism grows out of scripturalism and advances further by superseding it. "In both Indonesia and Morocco the prologue to nationalism coincides with the epilogue to scripturalism" (p. 73). At the early stages a religious self-purification is combined with political nationalist self-assertion; in the end the scripturalists are left behind and become isolated.

As regards modern Thailand, none of these propositions fits conclusively. Thailand's contemporary Buddhist revitalization, of which scripturalism is a part, is in some ways not a *unique* modern phenomenon but an expression of other similar vitalization movements that have occurred in the past in the Buddhist polities. Extending from as far back as the Asokan era, purifications of religion have occurred in the reigns of famous kings in Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand. These purifications have been scripturalist; they also carried an ideology of political action (e.g., unification of the country, war against the enemy, and building a prosperous society).

Thus, as far as most Thai are concerned, it would be difficult to detect in present-day events a shift from religiousness, from Buddhism as a way of life in all its ramifications, to a more skeptical narrower on-the-defensive religious-mindedness. Virtually at all levels of society the integral relevance of their religion for conduct is not in doubt. Buddhism is as much the religion of the bourgeoisie as of the peasant, of the soldier as much as the recluse.

This attitude is partly the result of the greater sense of intactness and continuity experienced by the Thai as compared with other Asian societies actually colonized by Western imperial powers. But it also derives from the intrinsic character of Buddhism itself – how its tenets relate, on the one hand, to the confident claims of positivist science and, on the other, to the concerns of the politico-social order.

We may also take the opportunity now to indicate the distance at which modern Thailand stands in relation to two features alleged to apply to modern Java by Anderson (1972). We are told that "The reasons for the great receptivity to scripturalist ideas must ultimately be traced to the deepening impact of Dutch capitalism and technology in traditional social and economic life and of secularising rationalism on traditional beliefs" (pp. 59–60). By comparison, Thailand's modern scripturalism, while it owes much to the colonial contact, is as we have seen also a recurring traditional phenomenon.

Perhaps more interesting is Anderson's comment that unlike the traditional Javanese evaluation of the politician as a man of high prestige, the modern Islamic world view attaches little status to terrestrial power precisely because all real power is in God's hands and highest status belongs to the religious scholar. The modern Islamic politician is caught in a dilemma: As a politician in a heterogeneous society like Indonesia he must deal with non-Muslim and barely Muslim groups, but his dealing with them threatens to blur the boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims and to contaminate the purity of Islamic teaching. "To the extent that he authentically represents the claims of Islam, he will have high prestige within his own community but little purchase on the nation as a whole; to the degree that he succeeds in working out relationships with non-ummat groups and spreading his effective influence in the society at large, his prestige within his own community may be weakened" (p. 62). The

Buddhist and the Islamic polities produce the same consequences for entirely different reasons. The Buddhist world view always valued the man of action (king or politician) insofar as he championed and implemented dharma, but the Buddhist conflation of *sasana* (religion) with the fortunes of an ethnic-linguistic-cultural "people" does result in the Buddhist politician's incapacity to deal successfully with a heterogenous collection of peoples existing within a modern state, especially when the results of the period of Western colonial rule may be interpreted as having caused a depression in the majority group's (as well as the minority groups') traditional religion and culture, a loss of identity, and imbalances among the groups in the sharing of colonial rewards.

Now as far as the intellectual stance taken vis-à-vis science is concerned, there are certain modern Thai points of view that no doubt fit the including and excluding polemical strategies listed by Geertz. But I think it is important to grant that Buddhist tenets – informed as they are by a certain number of concepts translatable without excessive distortion as materialism, atomic pluralism, process-oriented impersonal action and reaction, if not causation – are in certain senses *ab initio* more congenial to the assumptions of positive science than is the monistic theism of Islam and Christianity.[20] So that there is intellectual strength to the argument that Buddhist and scientific thought systems are compatable. Nevertheless, it is true that this compatibility has not by itself been a spur to the generation or stimulation of any marked scientific rational activity. Buddhist scripturalism has not hitherto fed scientific or technological achievement, nor is it an obstacle to it. What Buddhist revivalism today is championing, however, is a more morally positive orientation to this world in a political and social sense, an advocacy that is in line with its insistence on practice.

It is perhaps in this area that I see a real departure from Geertz's Islamic cases: While in the Islamic societies treated by him scripturalism may initiate nationalism but is later superseded by it, it is difficult to imagine this divorce taking in Thailand in our time. A secularist politics that does not seek its legitimacy in Buddhism is implausible as things stand now. This is partly because – as indeed the Sinhalese *Mahavamsa* states as a root paradigm – the traditional polities of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and so on, have always been Buddhist kingdoms in the sense that the consciousness of being a political collectivity is tied up with the possession and guardianship of the religion under the aegis of a dharma-practicing Buddhist king.

[20] As Conze (1970) says:

> The scientific propositions of modern science refer to abstract entities, or "constructs," such as atoms, molecules, electromagnetic fields, etc., and to their properties, tendencies and habitual behaviour. Common sense data are thus retracted to, transformed into, or replaced by concepts which are both more intelligible and "fundamental." Similarly the Buddhist science of salvation regards the world as composed of an increasing flow of simple ultimates, called "dharmas," which can be defined as (1) multiple, (2) momentary, (3) impersonal, (4) mutually conditioned events.

See also our references to Stcherbatsky on dharmas in Chapter 4.

In other words, one of the central theses of this book is that from early times Buddhism has been positively related to a conception of an ideal politico-social order, whose cornerstone was a righteous monarch who would promote a prosperous society and religion. This Buddhist conception of a moral polity readily fits with a formulation that only a materially prosperous society can be ready for the pursuit of spiritual concerns; it also fits equally with a political ideology of benevolent absolutism combined with welfare socialism, of nonviolence and peace side by side with aggressive militant protection of the treasure of religion. Given this interlaced totality of religion and politics, of national consciousness and religious identity, of righteous morality and politics, it is difficult to see in Thailand a secular nationalism dispensing with Buddhist referents in the near future. This point can be given substance only by examining the country's political process as I do in later chapters.

Let me now advert to a paradox. The encompassing dharma doctrine of the Buddhist polity to be realized via righteous kingship did not specify with any firmness or finality of detail specific norms and codes relating to the status and freedom of women, to marriage customs and rituals of family life, to the form and shape of intermediate corporate groupings standing between the individual householder and the state. Within the Buddhist fold itself there are no castes or religious congregations or lay sectarian associations separating themselves from nonmembers, outsiders, aliens, nonbelievers. Therefore, unlike Islamic societies – where a revivalist position is inescapably tied to traditional social codes that might be viewed by modernizing nationalists as obstacles deserving to be blasted away, a view that inevitably generates an antireligious or secularist opposition group – in the Buddhist polities new content can be poured into the socio-political mold because they are like hollow vessels that have in the past and could in the future hold varying contents. The ethic of the householder recommended by Buddhism, though perhaps not the "colourless bourgeois ethic" of Max Weber's description, escaped being a jurisprudential code grounded in the religious canon.[21] Hence Thai nationalism can wrap around itself a cloak of Buddhistic aura without fear of finding religious obstacles to the social objectives it may wish to promote.[22]

[21] Historically, wherever it spread, Buddhism accepted the local social code and customs; its religious provenance had little to do with the moral correctness of social codes. Buddhism too could incorporate and hierarchize the particularities of the context in which it found itself, provided of course the Buddhist polity was accepted by all inhabitants as the framework of order.

[22] For example, Weber in *The Religion of China* (1964) appropriately describes the importance of traditional instruction in law, in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Brahmanism as follows:

The Christian universities of the Middle Ages originated from the practical and ideal need for a rational, mundane, and ecclesiastic legal doctrine and a rational (dialectical) theology. The universities of Islam, following the model of the late Roman law schools and of Christian Theology, practised sacred case law and the doctrine of faith; the Rabbis practised interpretation of the law; the philosophers' schools of the Brahmans engaged in speculative philosophy in ritual as well as in sacred law (p. 126).

Our discussion of contemporary Thai reformist ideology claiming to base itself on tradition would perhaps be incomplete if it did not subject itself to Bharati's tests of "cultural criticism" and "cultural self persiflage" – even though Bharati's irreverent wit does not camouflage the question of his own hidden assumptions.[23]

Bharati singles out the English-speaking *sadhu*, the politicians, the Indian teachers of Indian philosophy in English, the English-speaking urban lay devotees, and the like, as the propagators of the "apologetic patterns" of the current Hindu renaissance. It is true that some of their counterparts preaching in similar Buddhist "saintly" language are present in Thailand and project one of the many faces of the current Thai reformism and scripturalism – but definitely a more modest face. Let us quickly run through some of the problematic features of the current apologetics: It is true that many a young scholar-monk's thirst for English and modern knowledge is assuaged at the cost of genuine Pali learning; this again may affect the study and exegesis of primary Buddhist texts in Pali (and Sanskrit). The current exhortations of certain activistic monks, popular meditation teachers, respected *achan*, government officials, and lay enthusiasts do comprise pious sloganlike repetitions of certain selected well-worn texts and passages. Furthermore, some of the issues and their solutions about which we have already written at length have a wide Hindu-Buddhist currency in southern and southeastern Asia: the relations between science and religion, the paradox of the timeless truths of dhamma/dharma and their relativistic applicability to context and circumstance, the ultimate message of detachment being concordant with selfless action in this world, and so on. One cannot but concede that easy access to cheap printing spawns a spate of countless pamphlets purveying banal vulgarizations of these "great issues" in religious purple prose mismatched with similes drawn from the world of science. Finally, combined with all this is the familiar denunciation of empty ritual and superstition, at the same time affirming the mystical powers of the true mediator and the absoluteness of the religious truth per se.

But, contra Bharati, I want yet again to emphasize that if one slightly shifts the focus, some of the aforementioned features of modern apologetics, despite their excesses and vulgarities, are thoroughgoing historically rooted manifestations. First, one cannot reiterate sufficiently that the yard-

To this comment of Weber's we may add that law formed no important part of Buddhist monastic education, even in classical India.

[23] Bharati contrasts (and finds wanting) the present-day agents and literature of the Hindu renaissance and "Sadhuization" with the traditional (non-English-speaking) pandits and the truly canonical texts on the one hand and, on the other, with some concept of the modern man, who is presumably truly objective, rational, scientific, not committed to totalistic philosophical solutions, but rather practicing the analytical philosophy of Gilbert Ryle and A. J. Ayer! While the exposure of modern Indian cant is welcome, it is not clear in what sense Bharati's canonical pandit and his modern man are not contaminated by their own and the author's presuppositions and can represent genuine universalistic models for comparison. What about their respective cants?

stick too facilely graduated in terms of the dichotomy canonical versus postcanonical, by which purity and genuineness are sought to be measured, must confront the untidy fact that the canonical writings are ridden with paradox, are capable of different readings, and have been thus read at different historical times. These make for greater continuity between canonical and postcanonical ideas than is usually imagined and make the question of deviance of the latter from the former a vexed issue.

Second, we have amply demonstrated that the attempt to purify religion with its attendant features of devaluing ritual and superstition and returning to the canon is a recurring phenomenon in the Buddhist societies, not just a feature of the modern renaissance. Moreover, such has been the predilection of Thai Buddhism that the stress has always been on the study of the canonical literature of the *suttas* and *vinaya* rather than on the *abhidhamma*. This feature is perhaps associated with the fact that there has not been, like in India, the generation of major post-canonical texts like the Bhagavad-Gita ("the Hindu Bible" as some would have it) and of a line of charismatic saints like Vivekananda to preach the new versions of the dharma; also with the fact that the Thais in general show no penchant for polemical doctrinal debates but show more interest in the practical effects and fruits of meditation and virtuous action rather than reflection on commentarial texts.

It has been suggested that this is one respect in which Burma – with its tradition of *abhidhamma* learning – is different from Thailand and Ceylon: "The particular emphasis on Abhidhamma, on the scholastic philosophy, in traditional Burmese Buddhism. . . . is reflected in the tendency towards a systematical political theory in modern Burmese Buddhism. The efforts to synthesize Buddhism and Marxism are the most remarkable results of this development" (Bechert 1970, p. 777).[24]

[24] See Sarkisyanz (1965) for modern Burmese Buddhist ideology along these lines.

18. Missionary Monks (*Thammathud*) and National Development

Given the activistic ideological orientations discussed in the previous chapter it is not surprising that in recent years monks have become involved in various community development and missionizing programs – variously called *thammathud*,[1] *thammacarik*, *thammapatana*, and so on. These programs relate to the hill tribes and to the politically sensitive and economically least developed border regions, especially in the northeast, north, and south. (The *thammathud* program also includes the sending of missions of monks to foreign countries – to Malaysia, Indonesia, to Europe and America – in order to propagate Buddhism there – but we are not concerned with that here.)

Once again the ideological legitimation for this thrust is alleged to be found in impeccable doctrinal texts. Many contemporary monks would refer one to the oft-quoted Buddha's admonition to the first group of monks he sent out to spread the teaching: "Go you forth, O Bhikkhus . . . to preach the divine life for the benefit and happiness of the world, including gods and men" (*Mahavagga, Vinaya Pitaka*). Another popular citation is: "The Dhamma and Vinaya of the Tathagata is present in the world for the happiness of the world including gods and men" (*Catukkanipata, Anguttara Nikaya*).

Monks ambitious for their religion look back to the glorious age of Emperor Asoka, when Buddhism is believed to have been propagated to all regions of India and also overseas.[2] Thus Colonel Pin Muthukanta, the late director general of the Religious Affairs Department and keen promoter of the *thammathud* program, had this to say in an exhortation to monks to engage in missionary work:

Traditionally there have been two styles of propagation. In the *Thammathud* style monks went out and preached to the people in a firm determination to spread the teaching. The other style is *Thammakatuk*, which consists in monks waiting for laymen to come and invite them to give a sermon. Historically

[1] This word is derived from *dhammaduta*, literally meaning "ambassador/emissary of dhamma"; *thammacarik* means literally the "wandering dhamma"; and *thammapatana* means "development through dhamma."

[2] In Asoka's time, after the conclusion of the Third Council, the Thera Moggaliputta Tissa is said to have sent out nine groups of missionaries, seven to various frontier regions of India and one each to Ceylon and to Suvarnabhumi (Burma?). This is reported in the Sinhalese sources *Mahavamsa*, Ch. 12, and *Dipavamsa*.

Thammathud preceded *Thammakatuk*, as evidenced by the Buddha's first act after enlightenment of going forth and converting five disciples, and subsequently at their own request for further instruction, teaching them during Lent the *Anatta lakkanasutra*.[3]

Colonel Pin criticized the present-day custom whereby monks believe that the right conduct for them is to await invitation by laymen (*nimon*) to preach and the laymen believe that they must always give a gift to a monk after his sermon (*kan ted*). As in early Buddhism, monks should go out to wat, houses, the jungle, fields, and prisons and teach the dhamma *even if the recipient does not believe in it or does not want it.* (This nicely justifies monks' teaching the Buddhist morality to the "primitive" hill tribes.)

Although Colonel Pin does not say so, he may well have found a precedent in King Asoka's inscriptions for taking the dhamma to forest folk and frontier peoples. Thus Asoka's Rock Edict XIII says: "To the forest folk, who live in the royal dominions of King Devanampiya Piyadasi, it may be pointed out that the king, remorseful as he is, has the strength to punish the wrongdoers who do not repent"; the separate Rock Edict II says: "The unsubdued frontier peoples may wonder what the king deigns for them. . . . For my sake they should practice the Law of Morality and win this world and the next." In the same inscription he goes on to tell the frontier people: "My messengers and special officers will be in contact with you. For they are capable of assuring the frontier peoples and ensure their welfare in this world and the next."

Indeed the tribal welfare division of the Department of Public Welfare of the Ministry of Interior, which in 1965 launched a program of Buddhist missions to the hill tribes of Thailand – this program called *thammacarik* was approved by the sangha's Council of Elders and became a joint venture of the sangha and the department – had as its objective the conversion of the tribal peoples to Buddhism with an Asokan assurance. Pradit Disawat, the head of the division, is reported as having written that "the propagation of Buddhism among the different tribal groups would be likely to advance administrative and development goals among the tribal people because the integration of our people into a large community depends upon the ties of custom and religion." And the purpose of the program was "to strengthen sentimental ties (of Thai) with the tribal people and to create loyalties (of the tribal people) to the nation through the development of strong beliefs in Buddhism" (Keyes 1971).

Of the different kinds of programs currently found in Thailand I shall pay most of my attention to two: the *thammathud* program and the community development project organized by the two universities Mahachulalongkorn and Mahamakut.[4]

[3] "Thammathud Development" (in Thai), in *Phra Thammathud*, Vol. 1, First Year, 1968 (a magazine printed in Thai and edited by monks).

[4] I shall not refer in detail here to the *thammacarik* program organized by the Department of Public Welfare, in which monks accompany government officials to the

The Thammathud *Program*

The program of sending out missionary monks to the border provinces was first begun in 1964, when monks from Bangkok were sent to the northeast for propagating Buddhism. Subsequently, monks were sent out to the south. The program was, it would appear, first conceived at a political level, with the support of the officials in the Religious Affairs Department. The fact that it was conceived in the metropolis explains why it took the form of sending monks from Bangkok to the provinces to provide the leadership and stimulus for their rural counterparts.

The program had apparently matured by 1965, in which year seven groups of monks totaling 751 are said to have participated; in 1969 the number of groups had swollen to nine consisting of 1816 participating monks. Although it was originally sponsored by the Department of Religious Affairs, the program in its second year was officially taken under the wing of the *Mahatherasamakhom* (the Supreme Council of Elders). Each of the nine groups was allotted a particular part of the country and put in the charge of an eminent monk with ecclesiastical rank. The leaders of these nine groups formed a committee whose work was supervised by three very high-ranking ecclesiastical monks, all members of the Supreme Council, who were appointed leader and deputy leaders of the *thammathud* program. And as may be expected, the majority of these high-ranking leaders had their seats in the capital city.[5] Although in theory all nine groups are under the charge of the committee, some groups are more independent than others, as, for example, Group 4, which is concerned with *thammacarik* work with the hill tribes and is financed by the Department of Public Welfare of the Ministry of Interior.

I have mentioned already that the first stimulus for the missionary program came from the Department of Religious Affairs, which invited monks "for whom the public have respect and who are skilled in propagation work," as one monk-informant put it, to a series of deliberations. The first meeting was held in Wat Phrakeo, the royal wat that stands in the grounds of the old palace and is a venue for many state ceremonies. The prime minister himself attended. Subsequent meetings were held in Nakhon Prathom, which is said to be one of the oldest Buddhist sites in the country. The need for more active propagation of religion was discussed, and

hill tribes, nor the provincial centers for community development – for instance, in Surin, Ubol, Chiangmai – which have done active work. Keyes (1971) has information on the *thammacarik* program directed at the tribal peoples, some of which I refer to later in this chapter.

[5] In 1971 the Maekor Phra Thammathud was Somdej Phrawannarat, abbot of Wat Chetupon (who subsequently became *sangharaja*) and his two deputies (*raung maekor*) were Phra Ubali Kunoopatjaan, abbot of Wat Chakkrawat (and also head of Group 6), and Somdej Phramahaweerawong (also head of Group 5). All three leaders are based in the capital.

In 1968 six of the nine groups were led by monks from Bangkok-Thonburi. An important exception is Group 4, headed by the abbot of Wat Phra Singh in Chiangmai.

leaders of missionary groups were appointed. The leaders called for volunteers who, as the same informant put it, "should be healthy, possess knowledge and ability, and show willingness to work without receiving remuneration." Each group leader sent volunteers to the provinces, who then held meetings with the provincial ecclesiastical leaders and provincial volunteers in order to plan work schedules and strategies. In subsequent years the work has proceeded on the same lines on a more formalized and elaborate basis.

Something of the political flavor of the *thammathud* program can be sensed from this interview I had with an official:

Describing the "orientation course" for *thammathud* leaders which he organizes in Bangkok as chief of the division of moral education of the Department of Religious Affairs, Colonel P Said that it is attended by monks as well as government officials mainly from his own department and from the Department of Community Development (a unit in the Ministry of Interior). It is customary for the prime minister or the deputy prime minister and the supreme patriarch to give opening addresses. "The aim of inviting VIPs to address monks," the colonel said, "is to familiarize monks with the general policies of the government. It is hoped that monks will teach dhamma and morality to the people, for we believe that Buddhism helps national development 100 percent. One of Buddha's teachings is that people should economize, be diligent, cultivate good friends, and live moderately. The Buddha also taught that people should strive to live in peace. Some of the Buddha's teachings are related to economic and social development – such as *Mangala Sutra, Sigalavada Sutra, Kalama Sutra.*

"The orientation course given in Bangkok lasts only two to three days. The government is considering providing more money for a longer period of training. The course costs little money to hold because it is not necessary to pay the participating monks; furthermore they travel free from the provinces, and once arrived in Bangkok they don't have to pay for lodgings and food. . . .

"The orientation course in Bangkok is primarily for the monks in charge of administering the *thammathud* program. Each leader in turn will organize in the province where the program is being implemented an orientation course for the monks who will work under his charge together with the provincial government officials. Except for the recruits from the two monks' universities the majority of fieldworkers are provincial monks."

When I asked the colonel what the relationship of the *thammathud* program was to the Accelerated Rural Development Program (ARDP) implemented by the prime minister's office, he said that ARDP has agencies in all the sensitive areas and that they provide cars, movie projectors and films, and other services to the *thammathud* workers.

It is difficult to estimate the results achieved by the *thammathud* program, which is clearly politically inspired. Bangkok monks go out to the provinces, and for the short time of some two to three months (usually between March and June) travel from village to village in the company of local monks, by foot, car, or bus, giving sermons and also inculcating values of good citizenship and loyalty. These peripatetic monks are ex-

pected to teach the dhamma, to impart instruction about correct forms of ritual and worship and meditation practice. On the side of social welfare and national development they are alleged to preach on the need for people to practice restraint in consumption, to observe proper sanitary conditions, to improve health, and so on.

Let us begin with the testimony of a monk who is the secretary to one of the deputy heads of the *thammathud* program and is himself a lively champion of the program and fully aware of the political implications of the work of *thammathud* monks:

Many *thammathud* monks do their work on foot; they preach to people who want them to preach; it is Thai custom that people have to "invite" (*aratana*) monks to preach. Although this means that few people can be reached, it is an effective method because it is only people who wish to consult and listen to him who will approach a monk.

People in border provinces suffer from many problems and the monks can relay information about them to the political leaders of the country. "Psychological problems" can be immediately and directly dealt with by monks by means of the dhamma, but economic and material problems can be effectively dealt with only by the authorities. If the people feel that their lives are insecure, then it is necessary for police officers to be sent there; if they have insufficient water, then the relevant government department should be contacted. Either the Department of Religious Affairs or the leaders of the *thammathud* groups could relay the information to the relevant ministries.

The monks may be able to cooperate with the people in solving urgent problems. If a road is urgently needed, then the *thammathud* monk can organize the people to build it; he can also contact the appropriate government officer on their behalf because often the ordinary people don't know how they can approach the officials; also sometimes the officials are inaccessible, often a day's walk away. Sometimes villagers break laws because of their ignorance of the law, and the monk should be able to explain to them the laws of the country.

The most serious problems the people in remote areas suffer from are the lack of roads and water, paucity of schools, poor health and insecurity because of the activities of robbers and Communists.

The results of *thammathud* work are encouraging; indeed they are better than was expected. The money spent on the monks was very little. Monks in due course learned how to contact the kinds of people they could not meet in the ordinary way. They visited prisoners; they even asked *nai amphurs* (district officers) to round up lawbreakers so that they can talk to them. As a long-term objective they realize that they should reach the young, particularly schoolchildren; also urban laborers and workers. The monks have also addressed policemen, soldiers, and government officials and realize that they should be and can be models for the public at large. At the moment some government officials by their improper actions create in the public feelings of antagonism against the government.

Many government departments have reported favorably on the *thammathud* "program's achievements. People living in faraway villages have little opportunity of meeting monks or only meeting poorly educated monks. Many of them have requested the *thammathud* monks to reside permanently in their settlements."

This monk's rosy picture is matched by the annual reports of the various *thammathud* groups, which tend to show arithmetic inflation: Thus, for instance, in 1968[6] all nine groups claimed to have instructed some 67,000 workers, 19,000 prisoners, and 500,000 students; they also claim to have instructed 1,295,000 members of the public at mass meetings and elicited the public declaration of 168,000 persons that they were Buddhists (this last, referred to as *Buddhamamakan*, is reminiscent of the mass conversions claimed in the old days by Catholic priests in India and Ceylon).

Although it is difficult to estimate the practical consequences of the *thammathud* program, it is clear that it has its uses: It is indeed a very cheap program of propagation and propaganda, because the monks are merely paid their travel expenses and no wages. Apart from the religious benefits accruing, the monks can serve a valuable political function of not only relaying the wishes of the government to the people but, more importantly, channeling upward the grievances of the isolated villages (such as the inadequacy of schools, roads, etc., and the uncivil behavior of civil servants and police officers). Thus a document reporting the activities of the *thammathud* groups for the year 1969 did not mince words when it declared: "The problems of the people which the Government should solve urgently are transport, security, illness, and the conduct of some civil servants. Another problem is securing reasonable prices for agricultural products."[7]

Finally, it is clear that other monks explicitly or implicitly conceive the *thammathud* program as having the objectives of reducing regional grievances (particularly of the northeast), of stemming communism, and of mobilizing loyalty to the king and the nation and by extension to the government through the agency of religion. Two young monks at one of the two universities made these comments that are sensitive to the political implications: "*Phra thammathud* work is encouraged because monks can approach the people better than government officials can; the Communists are against these officials"; "*Phra Thammathud* is a program that involves monks in politics and was originated by the government after the emergence of terrorists." Monks who have participated in the program reported to me as making the foregoing exhortations and the reports of various groups show that counterinsurgency was explicitly on their minds.

For example, in the same document just mentioned, Group 6 reported in 1969 estimates of Communists in the northeast in Nakhon Phanom, Ubol, and Buriram and warned that if the government did not remedy shortcomings, the Communists would gain ground. Group 4, however, warned: "The *Phra thammathud* should not often mention or talk about the terrorists, for accusation is not the monk's habit. Moreover accusations will be dangerous to the *thammathud* monks themselves." Group 9 asserted with uncomplicated enthusiasm, "when teaching people, emphasis

[6] See Annual Report of the Department of Religious Affairs, 1968 (in Thai).

[7] *A Summary of Phrathammathud Work Within the Country in 1969* (in Thai), prepared by the Department of Religious Affairs.

should be placed on the gratitude people owe to the nation, religion, and the King, including the land in which they live and which gives them peace and happiness."

Conversations with monks whom one knows well can bring out certain aspects of the *thammathud* program that do not find their way into reports. Here is an excerpt from my notes:

Phra C, a young monk in his twenties, who after nine years of service as novice and five years as monk (in a Bangkok wat) decided to disrobe in October 1971 at the conclusion of Lent. His ambition was to get to the United States to a junior college in Los Angeles. He was hoping that his patron's – a Chinese businessman's – financial aid combined with his own savings would get him to the States and see him through the initial phase.

Phra C belonged to a wat whose *abbot* and the abbot's secretary were actively involved in *thammathud* work. He himself participated in the work in 1969 and gave me this account of it:

He went in a group of three monks, all from his wat and all acting as the assistants of the abbot, who was one of the chief administrators of the program. These monks were entrusted with the work of making a rapid inspection of the *thammathud* work being done and of reporting on its progress to their abbot. The trip lasted 23 days. The group visited Korat, Buriram, Surin, Ubol, Nakhon Phanom and Sakon Nakhon provinces in the northeast.

Phra C said that their task was primarily to give sermons on the dhamma. In Surin province many villagers over 40 years old did not understand Thai, so the sermons had to be translated into Khmer. In Nakhon Phanom, he said, the story was circulating that terrorists were promised a reward of 10,000 baht for the head of a *thammathud* monk. Actually, one monk had already been killed by terrorists. Since it was considered dangerous to travel in government-owned vehicles, the ecclesiastical governor of the province gave the three monks money to engage taxis. Phra C further elaborated that army and police officials stopped the taxi in which the three monks were traveling five times in order to examine their papers and luggage. The terrorists, he said, were recruited from the immigrant Vietnamese who resided in Nakhon Phanom province.

But whatever the truth of there being a price on the heads of missionary monks – such occurrences are obviously not a widespread phenomenon – it is undeniable that insofar as monks propagate political values of national unity, loyalty to the present king and government, and so on, their voices will not be easily ignored or disregarded, by virtue of the respect and regard they enjoy in the society. Furthermore, it is undeniable that all the monks who have in one way or another participated or wish to participate in developmental activity and dhamma propagation confidently assert, in the same vein as some informants I have copiously quoted – the frequency of this assertion in the capital almost smacks of being an official sangha ideology – that the common people of the remote villages earnestly desire to meet monks and look upon them as their natural and trustworthy mentors (one monk told me that "when villagers meet a monk, it is as if they have found gold") and that therefore monks will be able by virtue of their

disinterestedness to act as mediators between the people at large and the government.

A 41-year-old monk residing in the capital, with *parian* grade 8 to his credit, who was very active in the affairs of his wat, being the head of its *paryattitham* school and its secretary (*lekha*) – in other words, one of the impressive breed of young scholar-teacher cum administrator-monks – had this to say about monks' involvement in *thammathud* and community development (*patana*) work:

"The monk," he said, "is much revered and respected by laymen, especially in the villages. Therefore, people will give heed to his words even if he were to instruct them in matters relating to hygiene and health. National development, and the monks' participation in it, is not antagonistic to Buddhism but in keeping with it. It is also in keeping with the monks' activity of *kanthathura* (pursuit of learning and its propagation)."

Mahachulalongkorn University has a special unit called the Center for Special Projects, which is charged with the administration of four activities. Two of them consist of activities conceived and implemented from outside and in which the university participates as a member unit, namely, the sangha's *thammathud* program and the *thammacarik* program organized by the Department of Public Welfare and implemented among the hill tribes. But besides these, and of more consequence, are two other activities that the university itself organizes, the second in conjunction with Mahamakut University, namely, the program of sending graduate monks to the provinces for religious work and the community development program wherein provincial monks are trained to engage in development work.

These latter two programs are better conceived, more serious in intent than the official *thammathud* activity, and constitute direct responses from within the ranks of educated monks that monks should play a more positive role in society. Here I shall report on this program as it is carried out by Mahachulalongkorn University. In a document explaining the nature of their project at Mahachulalongkorn, the university authorities declare without reservations:

The Buddhist University has been making strong efforts in observing the social responsibilities of the monkhood by participation in various social welfare activities and by including its own social welfare programs, all as joint-works or in cooperation with the administrative institutions of the Monastic Order of Thailand, the Government units, especially those concerned with religious affairs or welfare activities, and other institutions and organizations working in the same cause. . . . Through the expansion of this Project and through the coordination of these existing welfare programs, the University is working towards the goal of achieving the welfare and happiness of the people and world peace."[8]

[8] *The Project for Encouraging the Participation of Monks in Community Development*, a translation of the booklet published for the Inaugural Ceremony of the Dhamma

The Mahachulalongkorn project is as noted earlier two-pronged:

1. One program sends out to the provinces, for a working period of one or two years, monk-volunteers who have at least five years' service and have graduated from the university. Before departure they are usually given a short course on development work. These graduate volunteers are detailed to work under the ecclesiastical governors of provinces (*chaokhana changwat*), doing what is requested of them but usually engaging in teaching in monastic schools. They are also expected ideally to stimulate local monks to form social work centers for the promotion of community development.

It is evident that this program has, apart from the benefits derived by the recipients of their service, the function of satisfying the achievement needs of educated monks, of giving them fulfilling roles so that they can use their education creatively, both in religious and secular subjects, and, important for the sangha, of postponing by at least two years the possibility of their derobing and joining lay society and finding in it a more rewarding occupational niche. Roughly 80 graduate monks are sent out each year, and since their period of service is usually about one year (at the end of which they usually return to Bangkok to teach at the university or to go to India to engage in further studies at Benares, Nalanda, Baroda, or other universities, or to disrobe), the total number in the field at any one time does not differ from the annual number dispatched. The Asia Foundation, which has enthusiastically supported the Mahachula program, gives the graduate monks serving in the field an honorarium (of a few hundred baht) to take care of travel, food, and other needs.

When I asked an administrator from Mahachulalongkorn to comment on the efficacy of this program, he said that in theory these graduate monks should send reports on their work to the university; but that since the university did not direct or control their work, the provincial ecclesiastical heads deciding what they should do according to policy decisions taken by them, there was in practice no continuing and cumulative evaluation of the work done. He also commented that the program was burdensome to keep going, because most graduate monks wished to go abroad, chiefly to India, to further their studies, and did not usually wish to continue for more than two years in the provinces.

2. The second part of the project does the converse: For a period of usually two months it brings to Bangkok suitable volunteer monks from the provinces for intensive training and then returns them to their old wat and villages so that they can initiate community development projects. The university authorities send out letters to the ecclesiastical governors of selected provinces requesting them to send volunteers who have completed at least five years' service, have reached at least any of the *parian* or *naktham* grades, and are not over 50 years of age. This program was first begun in 1966 and was given financial support for the first year by a U.S. organization called the Fund for International Social and Economic Edu-

Course A: Group 11 on December 26, B.E. 2510, at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, Bangkok.

cation (now called Center for Rural Development, Cambridge, Massachusetts). In the following two years the program received state aid from the Department of Religious Affairs; it was later discontinued in 1970 but was reactivated in 1971 with financial aid partly from the state and partly from a German organization called the Friedrich Neuman Foundation.

The syllabus of the two-month course given in 1967, in addition to instruction on Buddhism, consisted of courses in Thai history and, more importantly, on community and rural development, vocational training, sanitation, first aid and public health, ecclesiastical and public law, and so on. I was able to watch at close quarters some features of the training program that began in November 1971 and was planned to last 68 days. Altogether 59 volunteers were being trained (the number in previous years being around 40); they came from 40 different provinces, but the majority were recruited from the northeast, preference being given to sensitive areas. Although the volunteers came from the provinces, some of them had already had previous training in one of the two universities in the capital.

I found about 15 different lecturers instructing the volunteers on various subjects. Here is a list of topics and lecturers:

1. "Public Law" by an official from the Ministry of Justice.
2. "Gems from Buddhist Scriptures" by an official from Rajabandit Thesathaan.
3. "First Aid" by a doctor from Chulalongkorn Hospital.
4. "Ecclesiastical Law" by an official from the Department of Religious Affairs.
5. "Rural Development" by the governor of Nan province.
6. "Comparative Religion" by the secretary general of Mahamakut University.
7. "Meditation Practice" by a famous meditation instructor (Phra Thepsiddhimuni) from Wat Mahathad.
8. "*Abhidhamma*" by the secretary general of Mahachulalongkorn University.
9. "Criminology" by a police lieutenant.
10. "The Administrative Work of the Monastic Secretary" (*lekha wat*) by the secretary of Wat Anong, Thonburi.
11. "The Buddhist Monk from a Layman's Point of View" by a noted writer and publisher.
12. "Ecology and Environment" by a teacher from Mahidol University.
13. "Credit Societies" by a headmaster of a Catholic school.
14. "Buddhism and the Modern Man" by Phra Wisudhimoli, the deputy secretary general of Mahachulalongkorn University, a gifted scholar-monk.
15. "History of Buddhism" by an ex-monk and an ex-member of the legislative Assembly representing Roied province.

The intention was that these monks should, when they returned to the provinces, initiate development work on a long-term basis and that to do this work they should be made aware of physical, social, and economic

needs of the villagers and given some idea of how they can be met. It was also aimed to give them information about the basic public laws and government policies, so that they can be suitable mediators between villagers and government officials and agencies and also informed advocates of national development, if not effective initiators of welfare projects.

This university program appears in some instances at least to have borne better fruit than the *thammathud* program discussed earlier if only for the simple fact of its relatively long-term and more systematic character that enabled some cumulative achievement.

Social service programs have also been put into action at certain provincial Buddhist centers, which train local monks to initiate village development projects. For example, an evaluation report sent from the Surin center for 1970 claimed the building of roads, wells, latrines in certain provinces.[9] Ubol is said to have the first of these provincial centers; another such center appeared to exist in Loei. All these locations are in the northeast.

No discussion of provincial achievements in the sphere of community development led by monks is complete without mention of the *thamma patana* mission organized by Wat Phra Singh in Chiangmai. The mission sends out teams composed of teachers and students of monastic schools, students from Chiangmai University and Agricultural College, government officials and lay assistants. In 1967, 10 teams, each composed of 5–6 members, were sent to various districts in the north, and their report for that year of work accomplished in the way of building or repairing roads, footpaths, small bridges, latrines, wells, school buildings and equipment, and so on, is quite impressive.[10]

To what extent are these programs political in nature? The *thammathud* program has a more obvious political coloring than the university program, which is more concerned with community development rather than with intensifying national political integration through religious cum political propaganda. While in the narrow sense the university program may be nonpolitical, it is clear that in their own prospectus the university authorities declare their concern with national well-being and their willingness to work with relevant government units. Also to be remembered is that a number of the members of the project's advisory committee, and indeed the project's patrons themselves, are eminent ecclesiastical dignitaries already concerned with *thammathud* work. And the advisory committee's lay members are directors general of various government departments, that is, high government officials. Such interlocking membership shows the linkage among the monks' universities, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and the secular administration.

The university project gained in 1971 the official stamp of approval and

[9] A copy of the report was provided me by William J. Klausner of the Asia Foundation, Bangkok. These social service programs are in part financed by the Asia Foundation, which appears to be the largest donor and sponsor.

[10] A copy of the summary report was provided me by Klausner of the Asia Foundation, Bangkok.

patronage of the sangha's Council of Elders and the government's Department of Religious Affairs. This official recognition was accompanied by the request that this year's provincial trainees at the university also be taught the methods of *thammathud* work (a request that makes the university's program official without changing the content of the training course).

The interlocking with government agencies and personnel is much more direct in the hill tribes' *thammacarik* program, which sends monks together with officials to propagate Buddhism to the "heathen." The same interlocking is witnessed in the Wat Phra Singh project in the north, described earlier.

In the long run the net result of the monks' engagement in propagation and development work would be to draw the sangha, especially its ecclesiastical hierarchy, into closer relations with the government hierarchy and officials, both at the central and regional levels. The possibility of the Bangkok-based upper reaches of the ecclesiastical hierarchy working closely with government ministries and departments, which are also centralized in Bangkok, is easily accomplished, and perhaps it is the interlocking in the provinces that is more critical.

At the provincial level the ecclesiastical governors and their district heads are also increasingly, if unsystematically and unevenly, being drawn into contact with the civil governors, district officers, and other officials. Indeed, some of the reports of the *thammathud* groups request that government officials work more closely with them in order to ensure success and that government officials helping in the monks' programs be given special recognition. All these developments could lead to a firmer cross-linkage and a closer integration between the ecclesiastical framework and the political structure at all levels than has hitherto obtained (especially at the lower levels of the hierarchy in the rural areas). We should note too that the government has for some years promoted rural development programs, the most spectacular of which is the previously mentioned ARDP, undertaken in so-called sensitive rural areas. In this wider perspective the monks' development activities constitute only a band – a narrow band at that – in the total spectrum.

The monks' propagation of Buddhism among the politically sensitive hill tribes – irrespective of whether these tribes desire it or not – is part of a wider governmental action to incorporate them into the Thai polity. Monks I have conversed with talk blithely of going to the hill tribes to teach them the dhamma and morality, with complete obtuseness to the fact that these non-Thai minorities may have their own valid cultures and moralities. But this obtuseness, which in the past characterized the approach of many Christian missionaries, is also a characteristic of historical Theravada Buddhism itself. But the reasons behind the obtuseness are different in the two cases. Most Sinhalese, the vast majority of Burmese and Thai, can only conceptualize their identity and their nationhood in terms of their adherence to Buddhism. Burmese Buddhism cum nationhood has in the

recent past expressed itself not only in terms of intolerance of the religions and cultures of the hill tribes but also in terms of denying elementary religious rights to minorities like the Muslims (D. E. Smith 1965). Sinhalese Buddhist attitudes to minorities in the recent past bore a similar character in that Buddhism again helped to delineate nationhood and ethnicity. The Thai concept of nationhood and polity most conspicuously reflects the inherent and intrinsic role of Buddhism. Thus Buddhist nationalism in its political and cultural dimensions dictates the policies whereby minorities – especially those considered politically and culturally inferior – are sought to be nationalized and domesticated or, if they resist, simply eliminated.

We have so far viewed the formulation and implementation of these various programs that have involved monks in the propagation of certain religious and political values and in the promotion of community development primarily from the point of view and perspective of the metropolis. But what looks like feverish excitement and concentrated effort in Bangkok may well look like dissipated energy making a weak impact in the vast arena composed of countless dispersed villages.

We should take good care not to exaggerate the impact in remote places of monks' missionary activities – nor indeed the welfare and developmental activities of the government – as indicated by the cautionary remarks of observers of the scene, which begins in the remote village or mountain settlement and extends outward to centers of governmental authority and effort in the districts and provinces, many of these centers themselves seeming remote and inaccessible as judged from Bangkok. For example, in 1967 Kunstadter wrote as follows concerning the hill peoples of northern Thailand.

> With the exception of the malaria control programme, the normal rural programmes of the Royal Thai Government (community development, agricultural extensions, etc.) have not reached into these hill areas. The major burden for providing the usual range of government [*sic*] has fallen on the Border Patrol Police, and more recently on the Hill Tribes Division of the Public Welfare Department . . . (p. 74).
>
> In the few hill villages where there are Buddhist temples (for example the Lua' villages of Baw Luang or Kawng Lawi) young men may enter the priesthood, but ordinarily young men living in the hills do not go down to the valley to receive religious instruction or to enter the priesthood. The recently established Buddhist missionary programmes in which monks have gone into the mountains, for example, are well meaning, but do not fit into the local situation. That is, they do little to increase interaction and integration of upland people into lowland society through participation in the same *local* religious institution. Lowland people are not inclined to regard hill people as Buddhists in spite of the fact that hill people's religious behaviour contains some elements also found among the Buddhist Valley dwellers, any more than the lowlanders will admit that they, like the hill people, may be animists in that they serve a wide variety of non-Buddhist spirits (p. 77).

Keyes (1971) provides some insights into the reasons for the shallow achievement of the *thammacarik* program addressed to various tribal peoples such as the Yao, Lisu Lahu, Akha, Karen, and T'in, with the heaviest emphasis on the Meo (followed by the Karen). The Meo are, as is widely known, the focus of a Thai governmental political program that seeks to wean them from shifting agriculture and encourage sedentary agriculture instead, to end poppy growing, to inculcate loyalty to the Thai polity and thereby help maintain the security of national frontiers. The *thammacarik* program, which also tries to convert the tribals to Buddhism, suffers from the weaknesses in communication that frequently "civilized" agents from dominant societies adopt toward the "aboriginals."

According to Keyes,

> The methods utilized by the Thammacarik monks [who visit and work for periods of two to four months at the mission stations, already established by the Department of Public Welfare workers, in groups numbering three to five composed of both Bangkok and local monks] include the exposing of tribal peoples to clerical behaviour, teaching them how to pay respect to the Triple Gems, teaching them to make merit by giving alms to the monks, encouraging them to be confirmed as Buddhists, and, for a few men and boys, encouraging them to be ordained as novices or monks (p. 31).

But in the light of the facts that the program was so uniform that it failed to make distinctions among groups that have had long or short contacts with the Tai-speaking lowlanders depending on their migration and settlement history, that the monks were usually unable to communicate with the tribal people owing to an absence of a common language[11] – a problem compounded by the fact that even those few monks recruited from the tribes were (in 1968) sent to work with groups other than those to which they belonged! – it comes as no surprise that what was transmitted to the Karens studied by Keyes were certain pieces of ritual behavior (e.g., how to give alms to monks) rather than an understanding of the basic tenets of Buddhism. "With the departure of the monks, nothing appears to have changed in the beliefs of the Karens" (p. 32).

The quantitative results of the tribal conversion program are thus understandably meager in the tribal areas, although their theatrical value in Bangkok is not to be ignored:

> In 1965, 12 tribal people were ordained as novices. In 1966 a major ordination ceremony of 18 tribals was held at Wat Bencamabophit in Bangkok which was attended by officials and members of the families of those ordained. Also in 1966, permanent monks were assigned to two tribal villages. In 1967 another 46 were ordained, four of whom were monks and the rest novices. About half of these were ordained in Bangkok while the rest were ordained in local temples in the North. However, of those ordained, few remained for even a whole lenten period. As the abbot of Wat Bencamabophit told me in an interview, the high

[11] This finding made by Keyes relates to the Karen stations of Mae Sariang district, Mae Hong Son province.

"drop out" rate was a consequence of the fact that the adult men involved had to return to support their families and that many were illiterate and thus could not participate fully in all activities of clerical life. In 1967, only two novices remained of a group ordained in 1965, while 25 novices and 1 monk ordained in 1966 still remained. (p. 31).

The lack of religious fit is not merely one between lowland Thai and the hill tribes. Even among lowland Buddhists there can be a discrepancy between the religious orientations of remote villagers and their monks on the one hand and on the other the orientations of Bangkok-based officials and monks. We can illustrate this point from many sources, but let us take as our example a rice-growing, remote Lue village of northern Thailand. Moerman (1966: 164, 167) describes the lack of congruence between village Buddhism and state Buddhism in these terms: What villagers require of a monk is that he enable them to make merit:

A priest's prestige depends on his personal attributes of age, rectitude, and spiritual power – not on his position in the official hierarchy. To the villager, young or old, significant religious knowledge has nothing to do with what is taught in the government's naktham classes. The decreasing order of significant religious knowledge in Ban Ping is: extrasensory powers, magical charms, knowledge of the spirits and how to control them, and familiarity with the Northern Thai sacred and profane literature (p. 165).

While of course it would be a false polarization to think that in Bangkok age, rectitude, and mystical powers are not valued in monks, it is nevertheless true that metropolitan Buddhism, especially as experienced in terms of office-holding titled monks and the new activistic *thammathud*-oriented young scholar-monks, places much greater emphasis on learning measured by success in *naktham* examinations held in the Thai language and *parian* qualifications of national validity and on positions achieved in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The kind of misunderstandings and divergent expectations that can inhere in the confrontation between village and ecclesiastical Buddhism is well described by Moerman:

The government attempts to use the ecclesiastical hierarchy to control the villagers. When Ban Ping was unwilling to help construct a new school building, the district administrative officer came to the village with the district abbot. The abbot preached a sermon in which he told the congregation that schools and roads make as much merit as temples because they bring about progress and call for cooperation. Just in case the villagers had missed the point, the district administrative officer summarized the appropriate part of the sermon. Afterward, some villagers admitted that a road might make merit but their explanation was that without one people could lose their way or be attacked by thieves. Some admitted that a school might make merit but their explanation was that only after passing the fourth grade can a boy become ordained. All insisted that nothing makes as much merit as a temple and since a new vihara was then under construction in Ban Ping they could not afford to divert any efforts for the benefit of the school (p. 166).

Nevertheless, we should not carry such analyses too far, because the overriding situation in Thailand today – we exclude the northern hill tribes from this consideration – is a political nationalization that also has its central-Thai-inspired Buddhist dimensions. (We should perhaps keep in mind that the process of national integration both in civil and religious administration began in a decisive way in the time of King Chulalongkorn.) Moerman himself is aware of this process as attested by these words:

> The villagers of Ban Ping are suspicious of the national hierarchy and do not understand its social gospel. Nevertheless, the form and content of the Buddhist church links the village to the nation. Officials, both clerical and lay, are occasionally said to have earned their positions by means of religious merit. The presence of clergy legitimizes state ceremonies and makes them more intelligible. Prominent priests are respected and the national Buddhist vocabulary is universally understood, for Buddhism is an institution that all Thai, whether Central or Northern or Lue, whether urban or rural, hold in common (pp. 166–167).

It seems to me if this nationalization process is already making its impact on deeply remote villages, it has wrought stronger consequences in the more accessible villages of the so-called remote and border provinces. An index we can use to judge this is the degree of persistence of "old learning" among the monks and ex-monks in the local traditional languages and scripts of the northeast and the north as opposed to knowledge acquired in the contemporary national Thai language spreading outward from central Thailand.

I have elsewhere described (Tambiah 1968, 1970) the importance of the sacred Tham and Lao scripts in a village in Udorn province in the northeast and the kind of religious, ritual, medical, folkloristic, and mythological literature written in these scripts. This was the literary corpus traditionally available for monks and novices for reading and mastering. I also analyzed how as a result of the domination exercised by central Thai in the contemporary secular schools, the imparting of knowledge to novices and monks for *naktham* examinations in that language and its script, the injection into the provincial wat of central Thai printed matter (such as catechisms, sermons, magazines, and novels and other books), the desire for and the need for novices and young monks in the interior provinces to learn the traditional scripts and the literature embodied in them are fast vanishing. (The disappearance is not total insofar as some of the old treatises are being printed today in the Thai script.) This process of "Thai-isation" is closely related to another process I have outlined in previous chapters, namely, how the aspiring and able but poor youth of the villages become novices or monks and thereby enter the national educational stream via monastic schools, the successful among them moving to provincial capitals and eventually to the capital, and a certain number of them returning to wat situated in their natal provinces. The ones who return with academic honors and metropolitan sophistica-

tion become abbots and later commune and district and provincial holders of ecclesiastical positions. They bring with them the national Buddhist outlook, knowledge couched in Thai language, rites, and customs in favor in Bangkok and the provincial capitals.

While this kind of process is most forceful in the northeast, which provides the largest number of monks and novices who move along this network, similar effects are obviously felt in those border areas in eastern Thailand, where the Khorm (Khmer) script may have been traditionally dominant, and in northern Thailand, where Lanna Thai script played the same role. In 1962 in a village in Sanpathong district of the Chiangmai plain there was the same pattern of events that I have described for the northeastern village in Udorn: I found a library of uncared-for and disintegrating old Lanna Thai texts, and the interest of young novices and monks was focused on the new knowledge relevant to their religious examinations. In the light of these trends that appear to be irreversible and irresistible I would venture to say that the situation described by Moerman pertaining to his northern village in remote Chiengkham district is mainly of a transitory character:

> Part of the prestige of those who have been ordained comes from their literacy in Northern Thai. Despite the advent of the national language, mastery of the old script is still quite highly regarded, but its societal function has changed. The "alphabet of the temple" no longer links the village with the great traditions of Buddhism and Northern Thai legend. Instead it helps to decrease Ban Ping's participation in the new national culture and to provide standards of intellectual accomplishment independent of certification by government schools (p. 164).

But in succeeding paragraphs Moerman asserts, after referring to the kind of education imparted in the district town of Chiengkham, which is focused on *naktham* examinations, that "these old things [traditional knowledge written in the old script] are no longer much studied in the village temple, nor is the clergy willing to learn the new knowledge taught in town" (p. 165). Judged by trends since 1966, when Moerman wrote the essay in question, we can say that the vast majority of youth from remote areas, who have access to secular or monastic schools and who recognize themselves as Buddhist and as belonging to the Thai polity, have willy-nilly opted for "the new knowledge taught in town" and by that decision have contributed to the strengthening of a national sangha framework.

The Social Infrastructure of Monks' Activism

An analytical question poses itself regarding the kind of social infrastructural processes that can be seen as generating or, if this is too strong a word, as linked with the activistic ideology of Thai monks at the present

time. The simple answer is that the infrastructural basis is the modern sangha's role as an educational network, which provides the channels for geographical and social mobility and for intellectual attainments for an important segment of the population – the poor peasants. The sangha has historically played this role, but in modern times the role is intensified to a degree never previously known. Since the facts have been amply documented in previous chapters, let me merely restate the essential points.

The monastic network provides education for poor rural boys to whom secular education either is not conveniently accessible or whose families cannot afford the expense of secular secondary higher education. From an educational perspective the monastic system can be portrayed as a network connecting village wat (possessing elementary *pariyattitham* schools) with district and, more importantly, provincial wat centers (usually the seats of provincial ecclesiastical dignitaries), which have better educational facilities for the preparation of students for *naktham* and the lower levels of *parian* examinations. Those provincial centers in turn are linked to the multitude of wat in Bangkok, many of which have even superior Pali schools and can therefore not only prepare monks and novices for higher Pali exams but also prepare them for entry into universities. They also serve as residential bases from which monks and novices can attend other wat-based adult schools teaching secular subjects. From the two universities at the top can be secured B.A. degrees in Buddhism, education, or social science subjects. The other adult schools prepare monks and novices for the Ministry of Education's secular primary and secondary-level examinations and, subsequently, for teacher-training certificates or diplomas.

In short, the facts are that the monastic network has a vital educational function today for poor rural boys, that the most talented and motivated of these boys in the status of novices and monks find their way to the capital city, and that in the contemporary circumstances they are not satisfied with a purely traditional religious education but most devoutly want to acquire knowledge of secular subjects (*wicha lok*).

It follows inevitably that these talented monks, religiously disciplined and increasingly better informed as regards modern secular knowledge, should want to play an active role in this world if they remain in robes. The current ideological stress on the this-worldly and the here-and-now relevance of Buddhism and the current programs of community development in which young educated monks wish to participate partly at least fall into place as the manifestations of an underlying educational explosion among the religious.

In Chapter 17 I have already reported that the vast majority of a sample of novice and monk-students of Mahachulalongkorn University when asked about the role of monks in modern society thought it the vocation of monks to help society in various ways: by preaching the dhamma and spreading Buddhism, by counseling laymen on their moral and spiritual problems, by active participation in imparting education, by propagating

social welfare and community development programs, and, finally, by even providing leadership in the community.

Here let me report their attitudes to *thammathud* work, and the degree to which they have participated in it and to which they propose to participate in the future. Tables 18.1–18.5 present this information. Ninety-three percent of the sample of novice and monk-students approved of the *thammathud* program, while in actual fact only 26 percent had hitherto (1971) participated in it. The level of actual participation is small for the following reasons: Firstly, novices (who number 23 out of a total of 324) are officially not allowed to participate, and, secondly, the more advanced monks are selected for participation in preference to the less advanced monks as is shown by Table 18.3. The largest participation is by monks who were second- to fourth-year B.A. students, the intellectual elite of the university. The majority of those who had participated had worked either in the remote Thai provinces or among the hill tribes or both (Table 18.4).

The attitudes expressed by the sample to *thammathud* work in the future are interesting. As Table 18.5 shows, two-thirds of the respondents said that they would like to engage in it, the most popular places being border or remote provinces and overseas. The hill tribes are definitely not considered attractive in comparison with the adventure of going to foreign countries. It is also noteworthy that one-third of the monks either expressed no wish to engage in the work or abstained from answering the question.

These ambitions and orientations toward this-worldly activism seem perfectly understandable. Also understandable is the fact that if the committed scholar-monks and ecclesiastical authorities do not find fulfilling roles for young educated monks and novices, the latter, once they have finished their education, will be tempted to disrobe in even larger numbers than before and to find satisfying occupations in the lay society. In my view such a process is not to be deplored – these provincial youth discarding the monk's garb after securing education have neither exploited

Table 18.1. *Attitudes to* thammathud *work (sample of students at Mahachulalongkorn University)*

	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Approve of *thammathud* work	302	93.2
Disapprove	11	3.4
n.a. and other responses	11	3.4
Total	324	100

Table 18.2. *Participation in* thammathud *work* (same sample)

	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Yes	85	26.2
No	225	69.4
n.a. and other	14	4.4
Total	324	100

Note: The level of participation in *thammathud* work is influenced by two factors:
1. Novices are not officially allowed to engage in *thammathud* work and the number of novices in the sample is about 23.
2. The more advanced a monk's studies are at the university, the more likely he is to have engaged in *thammathud* work. Thus in our sample, for example, of the 89 monks in the preuniversity classes only 12 had already participated; of 31 in teacher-training only 8; of 63 first-year university 14; and of 139 in the second, third, and fourth years 50 (see Table 18.3).

Table 18.3. *Participation by educational level in* thammathud *work* (*same sample*)

Level at which studying	Number of respondents	Participation		
		Yes	No	n.a.
Preuniversity class	89	12	77	
Teacher training	31	8	22	1
University – first-year B.A.	63	14	44	5
– second-year B.A.	63	16	22	2
– third-year B.A.	40	17	37	6
– fourth-year B.A.	39	17	22	–
Other	2	1	1	
Total	324	85	225	14
Percent	100	26.2	69.4	4.4

Table 18.4. *Where* thammathud *work was done (same sample)*

	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Among hill tribes	8	2.5
Northeast	17	5.3
North	9	2.8
South	12	3.7
Both hill tribes and Thai villages	30	9.2
Overseas	2	0.6
Other	8	2.5
Never done *thammathud* work	224	69.1
n.a.	14	4.3
Total	324	100

Table 18.5. *Preferred areas for doing* thammathud *work in the future (same sample)*

	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Among hill tribes	32	9.9
Border/remote provinces	89	27.5
Primarily other countries/overseas	65	20.1
Hill tribes and remote villages	7	2.2
Undecided	16	4.9
Don't want to engage in *thammathud* work; n.a.	112	34.5
Total	324	100

nor demeaned their faith. Most have been assiduous observers of the *vinaya* rules, and when they leave, they do make a contribution to lay society, and newer and younger educational cohorts will succeed them.

A curious feature results from all this. The Buddhist sangha, an institution revered as much as the monarchy, perhaps more widely, is manned essentially by rural males originating from farming families. Urban society produces fewer and fewer regular monks though it still provides temporary monks for a single Lent of three months or for a shorter duration. The poorest region of Thailand, the northeast, produces not only the largest number of monks and novices, but also the largest regional contingent of monks and novices residing in Bangkok-Thonburi. Thus we are faced with the splendid paradox that if the northeast today is the seedbed of the

largest number of political insurgents, it is also the foremost bastion of the Buddhist faith and the source of the religious legitimation of the Bangkok-based political and administrative authority.[12]

From this primarily rural recruitment of the country's monks and novices can be deduced a political fact: By virtue of being rural and of farming stock the religious are predisposed to be by and large conservative and orthodox, with a willingness to accept constituted political authority and to work with it rather than question it, let alone attack it. In a sense it is true to say that most of the religious, like their rural kinsmen (*yaad phi naung*), are "apolitical" in the sense of being removed from national politics and, therefore, not oriented to participating in it. (It is interesting that although Burmese monks have in recent times a more dynamic tradition of participating in politics, often against the government, Spiro (1970) characterizes the majority of Burmese monks as conservative and orthodox for the same reason as I have given.

It is precisely because the vast majority of Bangkok monks are of rural origin, the largest numbers coming from the northeastern provinces, that the plan to send educated energetic young monks on *thammathud* or community development work back to their villages or provinces of origin makes this kind of program in one way brilliant in conception and strategically feasible, despite the possible lack of fit between village and metropolitan perspectives discussed earlier. Not only will monks be going to their home provinces, but they are also returning as successful urban-sophisticated scholars with the title of *pramaha* for Pali proficiency (which is in short supply in the rural areas) and even possibly with a B.A. degree or some level of teacher training. Hence establishing rapport among the rural population would not normally constitute a difficulty, and by virtue of their attainments they may even be accepted as opinion leaders and teachers (*achan*) capable of showing the way.

But this kind of advantage is countered by a certain disadvantage: While monks can indeed effectively perform educational and counseling roles relating to personal and family problems, in addition to their moral role of preaching the dhamma and performing rituals, it is questionable whether they can effectively lead and sponsor on a long-term basis community development projects that require highly trained professional skills (in both technical and communication engineering). Of course, their participation in these activities in cooperation with secular experts and

[12] Let me repeat statistics I have stated before to illustrate this point. The northeast with roughly one-third of the country's population had in 1968 50 percent of the country's wat, 32 percent of the monks and 48 percent of the novices. The monastic educational statistics for 1968 are also revealing: The northeastern provinces are said to have contained 41 percent of the country's religious teachers in monastic schools (*khru pariyatham*), 41 percent of the dhamma students (*nagrian tham*), and 38 percent of the Pali students (*nagrian bali*). If you add to this the northeastern monks based in Bangkok and Thonburi, the numbers will increase. A survey taken in 1968 revealed that 58 percent of the students at Mahachulalongkorn University for monks came from the northeast.

lay professionals is another matter, and their inclusion in such partnerships may be productive.

Be that as it may, one should be realistic about the degree to which monks, whose basic preoccupation is the spiritual task of ethical study and practice, have the organization and the capacity to shoulder country-wide plans of development and welfare. Here history can give us a warning, if not teach us a lesson. I allude to events already discussed in Chapter 11. In the 1890s, in King Chulalongkorn's reign, the princely monk Wachirayan and Prince Damrong, in charge of the Ministry of Interior, sought to push through elementary education in the provinces, using the monastic schools and monks as the vehicles and agents. The program was successful for a few years, but it is instructive that Wachirayan threw in the sponge and asked that the sangha be relieved of the onerous educational task (1) because the sangha was becoming overbureaucratized and involved with government machinery, (2) because the load was too heavy for the monastic system to carry, and (3) perhaps because monks were not in the long run the most effective transmitters of secular knowledge.

The Redistribution of Wealth Through Kathin *Gifts*

It is generally assumed that when the season of *kathin* presentations with accompanying noisy processions breaks the quiet piety of *phansa* (Lent), it is groups of laymen who organize and take the *kathin* gifts (or subsidiary *phapha* presentations) to individual monastic communities. This is not necessarily so, because in the processions, especially those that leave from the towns, it is not unusual to see monks also traveling as members of the donor party, having themselves made contributions in cash and kind; sometimes they are the organizers and sometimes the titular patrons (*phu upatham*).

I happened to make a long journey by car in late October 1971, which took me from Bangkok to the northeastern towns of Korat, Udorn, and Khon Khaen, and then to the northern towns of Nakhon Sawan, Lampang, and Chiangmai. In each of the towns I saw several *kathin* processions either making their way to some wat in the town itself, or more usually, leaving the town to make a presentation to a village wat some distance away. During my stay in Chiangmai, I made a count of about 15 such processions that I personally met in the streets in the course of four days while I went about my business (I did not go specially looking for them).

It is necessary to give some idea of the boisterous merrymaking character of this grand merit-making ceremony. The northern urban processions, for example (the pattern is no different elsewhere), would often consist of a long cavalcade of motorcars, trucks, and buses; the musicians would be out in front, followed by open trucks of dancers, usually women, then by another couple of trucks carrying money trees on which fluttered currency notes, with more buses and cars bringing up the rear crammed with merry donors. The chief sponsors are unmistakable because they conspicuously display themselves holding glittering

gifts in their hands. Sometimes the donors are more restrained, uniformed, and well-groomed officials from some government department. The procession usually makes a deafening din – what with the crackers being exploded, the drums beating, the singing and dancing, the blaring loudspeakers. If the procession is particularly boisterous and gay, it might be led in the front by men and women wearing masks or sometimes by women with liquor bottles in their hands or youth dressed up as pregnant women, all prancing and dancing with gestures both lewd and hilarious. Such robust behavior on the part of merrymakers on a pious errand is not inappropriate or in bad taste – for are not many of them approaching the sangha with gifts as though they were the hordes of Mara filled with passion and uncontrolled desires? And are they not soon going to dismount and quietly and modestly and with decorum prostrate themselves in subjection to the Buddha, the dhamma, and the sangha and make their gifts with a pure intention of generosity? And if, as it happens sometimes, monks too are in the procession, their still postures and quiet demeanor only serve to accentuate the contrast between the saffron-robed *bhikkhu* and the householder.

I want now particularly to concentrate on the implications of monks participating in these *kathin* presentations to other monks as donors and or as organizers. First of all, we should note that after the pious retreat of *phansa* the monks are now free to travel again. (During *phansa* a monk should not spend a single night away from his wat unless he has obtained special permission from the abbot, which is not easily given).[13] Secondly, we have already taken note of the fact that the vast majority of monks in Bangkok-Thonburi, and in the provincial capitals and towns, are of rural origins. Moreover, in the big cities and towns there are large numbers of laymen who have themselves come from villages or maintain links with kinsmen and friends there. Thus behind a large number of the *kathin* processions emanating from the towns lies the fact that the sponsors and donors – both laymen and monks – are mobilizing people who have come from a particular region or province (but also roping in donors who have no such affiliations) to contribute and make *kathin* presentations to wat situated in their region of origin. Very often the wat in question is the wat with which the sponsor(s) has a special connection – for example, it may be the wat of the village he was born in or the wat in a town patronized by his family, or it may be a wat whose abbot is a kinsmen or friend of the sponsor or the wat in which the sponsor was himself ordained as novice or monk (whether for temporary service or otherwise). In the case of monk-sponsors there is the further factor that they may wish to organize a procession to the wat of a monk who had previously resided in the sponsoring monk's wat and had subsequently returned to the provinces. Once the donee wat is selected, it is possible to find urbanites from the province or region in which it is located to contribute. And if the sponsor

[13] The rule is that if a monk spends more than seven nights and seven days away from his wat he will have broken *phansa* and cannot count it as observed. Permission is granted to be away under extreme circumstances such as grievous illness of the monk's parents, whom it is his duty to tend and succor.

and organizers are well known, they can persuade other unrelated laymen to contribute as well. This process of collection and mobilization is aided by certain features we have already discussed in Chapter 15: Monasteries in the capital contain regional groups of monks; and some monasteries are dominated by monks from a particular region. And it is not unusual for laymen who have migrated from certain regions to give special support to wat where monks of the same regions reside.

Whatever the considerations that motivate and facilitate the organization of the *kathin* processions, they clearly manifest larger implications. They represent a redistributive institution in the Karl Polanyi sense in that both the monks who have migrated from villages to the capital or other urban centers (some of who become famous titled Pali scholars and some famous titled ecclesiastical dignitaries, etc.) and the laymen of provincial origins who have achieved prosperity and success in varying degrees in the urban centers are distributing to the rural areas some of the "wealth" they have themselves accumulated and, additionally, are able to mobilize from others.

The redistributive system seems to display two basic patterns, which are a function of the nature of the hiearchy of urban centers and the character of urban migration in Thailand. Because Bangkok-Thonburi as the national capital has attracted laymen and monks from all over the country, the *kathin* processions radiate from the capital outward in all directions and to diverse provinces. But outside the capital, in each separate province, there is a greater likelihood for processions issuing from the towns to make their way to villages in the same province, not outside. (While of course there are exceptions, this is consistent with the usual pattern of migration of monks outlined in Chapter 14: They first go to monastic centers within the province of birth and then make a direct move to the capital, bypassing intermediate provinces and urban centers.) The most dramatic distribution would be effected by those lavishly endowed urban processions that visit some lowly isolated wat in some far away province.

As far as the sangha itself is concerned, we see in this redistributive pattern not merely an index of how the monastic network is activated or renewed and strengthened on certain occasions but also the *reverse* process of what I have previously delineated. If one of the conspicuous features of the national monastic network is that young and able and aspiring monks of different regional origins and loyalties make their way to the capital, thereby participating in urbanizing, centralizing, nationalizing, and "Thai-isation" processes, the *kathin* redistribution denotes their temporary return with a show of prodigality to their places of origin to bask in the admiration and warmth of those they had left behind. It is because of these implications that I include the consideration of *kathin* presentations in this chapter, for whatever the success of the official *thammathud* program, we witness here the same monks engaging in perhaps a less spectacular, and perhaps in some ways more effective, form of *thammathud* service.

It is possible that the very participation of monks in an activity that is after all preeminently the householder's duty may affect the discipline of the monks. Monks who are interested in organizing a *kathin* usually try to persuade a layman to assume the formal leadership. This layman may be one of his patrons (*yom*). But although there are many *kathin* organized and sponsored by laymen, there are also an impressive number whose recognized heads and patrons are monks. In not a few instances such a monk-sponsor may be the largest contributor as well. Furthermore, it is also not unusual for monks to be contributors to several *kathins* in which they may themselves participate.

How are monks themselves able to act as givers when they are the prime recipients? It is quite usual for individual monks in Bangkok (and in provincial centers) to receive an enormous number of gift packages (containing cash as well) because of their participation in rituals, because their individual piety attracts generous laymen, because they are successful astrologers, famous preachers, meditation teachers, and the like. Almost all of them lead restrained lives; they usually do disburse some of their accumulated gifts of robes, cigarettes, incense, candles, tins of biscuits, and so on, to their disciples in the wat; also some of their cash to help the educational needs of novices and young monks, young boys (*dekwat*) in their care, and even poor laymen. But there is also much left over that they may wish to give away in the form of a grand *kathin* gift.

It is of course true that monks' enthusiastic participation in the collection of money and gifts for *kathin* presentations can lead to abuses. Until about 1969 monks actively organizing *kathin* often went so far as to form sponsoring committees and to send out notices to lay patrons soliciting money. Such drives have now been forbidden by the sangha's Council of Elders. It declared that it is the business of laymen to organize, form committees, and take charge of the collecting and handling of money, though unofficially a monk may be the actual leader (*hua na*) or the official patron. There is no objection to a monk himself being the patron as long as the financial affairs are handled by laymen.

1. During the course of a conversation I had with a titled scholar-monk from Wat Praphiren (which is a relatively small commoner wat, or *wat raad*, located in Bangkok's Chinese business quarter and is popular for holding mortuary rites), he told me of his wat's keen participation in the organization of *kathin* presentations. He said that many monks from Wat Praphiren participate either as sponsors leading a group of fellow monks and lay donors or as contributing participants. A most active monk in this respect was the deputy abbot of his wat. He said that on October 23 and 24 (1971) at least three processions were expected to leave from his wat, all of them directly or indirectly organized by monks residing in the wat. He himself had personally contributed to four *kathins*. He observed that especially this year a very large number of buses had left Bangkok on *kathin* processions to faraway places.

His own wat had been the recipient of a collective gift of 25,000 baht and individual gifts of 20–25 baht to each of the 57 resident monks and novices, given on October 17 by the "Happy Citizens" (Samranrad) Police Station

(located in Bangkok), whose head had acted as the sponsor. He also told me that Wat Benchamabopit in Bangkok had assumed the responsibility of being the donor of *kathin* to any wat in the district of Dusit in the city that lacked lay donors.

2. When I visited the provincial capital of Udorn in the northeast on October 26, 1971, Wat Majjimawas, the largest and most important wat in that (Udorn) province, also a wat of royal status, was the scene of great activity.

A *kathin* procession whose leader (*prathan kathin*) was the deputy abbot of the wat – he was also the deputy ecclesiastical governor of the province – left the wat to proceed to the wat in his natal village of Ban Song Pueay, situated in the Kumvapavi district of Udorn province, which he had chosen as the recipient.

The procession consisted of 19 vehicles, 7 trucks and buses, and 12 cars. The first two trucks were elaborately decorated, and in them traveled women dressed in fancy costumes. Another truck was filled with monks. The deputy abbot explained to me the next day that both monks and laymen contributed (*anumodana kathin*). A total of 13,580 baht (approximately $680), and articles in the form of robes, blankets, towels, axes, and knives, constituted the gift.

The deputy abbot reported that no other *kathin* was being organized by the monks in the wat, but that there were several organized by laymen to which he was asked to contribute. Sometimes he is asked to be the nominal head of the *kathin*, although he had not really organized them, as he had done in the case of the *kathin* to his home village wat described previously. He considered this *kathin* to be his personal effort (*kathin song tua*).

Wat Majjimawas itself was due to receive its *kathin* a few days later on October 30; the civil governor of the province would be present on behalf of the king and attended by the officials of the province.

The Political Coloring of Burmese and Sinhalese Monks

The orientations of Thai monks differ from those of their Burmese and Sinhalese contemporaries in two main respects. In Ceylon and Burma, while resorting to modern mass methods for disseminating propaganda, the monks at the same time rejected Western culture and knowledge in the course of their revivalism and their demand for the restoration of an idealized past. This was part and parcel of the rejection of Western colonialism and of Western cultural values and customs, which were seen as having destroyed or degraded indigenous forms. Thailand, lacking this kind of direct traumatic colonial supremacy, is in many ways today more open to Western influence. This is clearly reflected in the orientations and aspirations of the monks: Theirs is not a rejection but an active adaptation to the West – at least in regard to their thirst for Western secular knowledge and their borrowing of certain organizational techniques. Precisely because there has been a historical continuity and their past is alive in their present, Thai monks do not self-consciously cry for the revival of the past.

The second major difference between the monks relates to their political orientations. The Thai monks by and large accept the existing political

authority as valid and in their recent activistic phase have desired to act in support of the political authority or at least to act within the confines of the established system. Furthermore, the Thai sangha today, more or less in line with conditions that prevailed in the past when the central authority was strong, is also firmly controlled by the political rulers as regards its freedom to engage in political activity. Once again this situation is heir to a historical continuity: At least since the establishment of the strong Chakkri dynasty, from 1782 onward, the vast majority of monks have kept free of political activity.

The situation is dramatically different in Burma and Ceylon. There, too, the orthodox historical pattern was that the sangha legitimated and supported strong monarchies (which also, by definition, were strong patrons of the sangha). But the virtual "disestablishment" of Buddhism in the colonial era and the consequent atrophy of any hierarchical ecclesiastical authority exerting control over the monks and monasteries gave rise in Burma to flux, schisms, the formation of new fraternities, monastic disputes, and the relaxation of monastic discipline. Indeed, the domination by a Western colonial power activated Buddhist monks into a tradition of political action often in defiance of the constituted government, a tradition that they carried with them well into the postindependence era.

The Burmese religious tale during British rule is instructive.[14] Before the British conquest, Burma had a certain ecclesiastical structure and organization: The king appointed the *thathanabaing* (*sangharaja*), the head of the sangha, who in turn appointed regional (*gainggyoks*) and other ecclesiastical officers. (Thailand as we have seen established a similar hierarchy in the mid-nineteenth century and an especially strong one in 1902 by King Chulalongkorn's sangha act.) Government officers appointed by the king enforced the *thathanabaing's* authority to settle monastic property disputes and to maintain discipline within the sangha.

Now as I have indicated at various places, it is important not to invest such ecclesiastical blueprints with a firm and concrete existence they did not possess. Whatever the formal theory, the structure of the polity, its administrative system, and the structure of the sangha hierarchy waxed and waned *pari passu* with the political fortunes of particular kings. Of the traditional Burmese ecclesiastical structure Nash writes, citing Mendelson (1960, 1961) that

> the court-appointed officials [i.e., the *thathanabaing* and *gainggyok*] mediated religious disputes via the ecclesiastical courts and intervened in instances of pongyi involvement with secular authority, but they did not form a true hierarchy of authority with levels of command and real power to sanction either positively or negatively. Then, as now, the social structure of the Sangha was a loose federation of sects, with such authority as existed vested in the head of a single monastery, or at most of a cluster of monasteries (Nash 1971, p. 107).

[14] For a full account of the developments in Burma in the colonial era, see D. E. Smith (1965).

But whatever semblance of order and regulation the traditional sangha hierarchy and the king's authority exercised over individual monasteries and monks – with the threat of purification in cases of abuses not to be discounted – was increasingly lost in colonial times.

The chief factor causing increasing entropy in the Burmese religious sphere was the British practice of "religious neutrality"; this was actually a policy of vacillation and progressive withdrawal of support from the existing ecclesiastical authorities that produced further atomization and lack of orderly relations within the sangha and between the monks and the political authority. In 1852 the erosion first began when, after the conquest of lower Burma, no ecclesiastical authority was recognized for this area, since the religious head was in the still unconquered upper Burma with his seat in Mandalay. After the conquest of upper Burma in 1886, the British, fearing that the sangha and its monks were a potential center of resistance to British control, failed to make the *thathanabaing*'s jurisdiction effective. After 1895 his office was not filled for eight years, and in 1938 the office lapsed altogether. In the meantime his authority had no legality in lower Burma, which refused to be ruled by any ecclesiastical authority. And throughout the country the politicization of monks and their engagement in militant, anticolonial, nationalist politics, accompanied by the breaking of many *vinaya* rules, drew from the British a tardy attempt to revive the authority of monks of senior (*sayadaw*) status. Even here British policy proved to be inconsistent, for in 1935 the Rangoon High Court ruled that the hierarchy set up in upper Burma, including the authority of the *thathanabaing*, had "no constitutional or legal status, and are in the same position as any other religious body not established by the State" (Smith 1965, p. 56).

Thus the British lack of support for the traditional Buddhist ecclesiastical structure whatever its previous looseness resulted in the further weakening of the sangha, a serious decay in internal order, and a powerful increase in political activity. D. E. Smith (1965) succinctly states the argument:

> In India neither Hinduism nor Islam ever developed an ecclesiastical structure; their strength lay in the socio-religious institutions (caste, Islamic law) which regulated every aspect of day-to-day life. The vitality of Buddhism in Burma (as in other Theravada Buddhist countries), however, was largely dependent on the ecclesiastical structure which maintained the unity and discipline of monkhood. Any religion in which ecclesiastical organization plays such an important role is vulnerable to an uncongenial political environment (p. 43).

The politicization of the monks and the weakened, atomistic nature of sangha organization have persisted into the postindependence period, even during the U Nu era of state promotion of Buddhism and euphoric Buddhist revival manifested by the holding of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council (1954–1956), by the achievements of the Buddha Sasana Council

in translating Buddhist texts, by the propagation of Buddhism among the hill tribes (*dhamma-duta*), and by the popularizing of meditation. It is these programs that, in turn, have influenced Thai Buddhism. However, in the midst of this religious resurgence, Burmese monks have successfully resisted any semblance of political control and regulation: They have refused the registration of monks, rejected the Ecclesiastical Courts Act of 1949, which was devised to settle monastic disputes and breaches of discipline, and they have turned down the proposal to create a sangha assembly to regulate sangha affairs on the grounds that it was mooted by the secular authority. Mass meetings, militant action, open confrontations with U Nu – the politician who came nearest to their conception of the traditional ruler – and anti-Muslim riots have all contributed to the military takeover by Ne Win.

Ceylon's story is similar in essentials, if different in details, as we saw in Chapter 9. At a time when the traditional Kandyan kingdom did not have a unified ecclesiastical hierarchy, there was a royal attempt, no doubt based on precedent,[15] especially in the eighteenth century, to centralize control of monastic affairs in two chapters – Malvatte and Asgiriya. But, more importantly, the British disestablishment of Buddhism was accompanied by their progressive reluctance to support monastic offices, adjudicate monastic land rights, and sponsor politico-religious rituals, which were traditional functions of the king. The shifting of the political and economic center of gravity to the southwestern lowlands and coastal areas led to the creation there of new fraternities, to a Buddhist revival among the urban bourgeoisie, and to increasing participation of monks in political activity. This activity intensified after independence, when the revival of Buddhism and the Sinhala language and culture, and their elevation to their rightful place became the slogans of democratic politics. And the contemporary Sinhalese monks, especially the members of the affluent land-endowed Siyam *nikaya*, reject any plan for centralized control and unified ecclesiastical authority because they will be deprived of their economic privileges.

In contradistinction to Thailand, it seems inevitable that not only would many monks in Ceylon and Burma, especially those that are urban based, become political activists but also that ideologists in these countries would make attempts to fuse Buddhism with some kind of doctrine of democratic socialism. For what Burma and Ceylon inherited at the end of British rule was a parliamentary structure for the enactment of politics through democratic processes. This structure necessarily directs politicians in search of votes to try to champion Buddhist nationalism on the one hand, and democratic/socialist policies on the other. It is understandable, since the Buddhist religion is an important ingredient of the Burmese or Sinhalese concept of nation, that as politics becomes more democratic, it would, at

[15] For example, the purification and unification of the sangha that Parakrama Bahu I is said to have achieved. See Chapter 9.

least during a certain initial phase, inevitably become more religious-minded before it becomes more secular. That politicians should therefore seek an ideological mix called "Buddhist socialism" should not surprise us.[16]

Appendix to Chapter 18. The Monks' Universities

Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University

In 1890 the monastic school located in the grand palace (in the Emerald Buddha temple) was moved by a directive from King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) to Wat Mahadhatu (Mahathad) and given the name Mahadhatu-Vidyalaya. Seven years later at the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the academy's *sanghasenasana* (monastic building)[1] the same king gave his own name to the academy: Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya. In 1947 Mahachula was invested with the status of a university and has continued to function in its own building within the precincts of Wat Mahathad.

Mahachula functions as an independent body with the president being an appointee of the Educational Council of the sangha but chosen from a list of candidates provided by the university. The university is administered by a board of governors, headed by the president, whose members are of two kinds: permanent ex-officio members and elected members. How much Mahachula is formally a creature of the official sangha (unlike the Thammayut sect's Mahamakut University) is witnessed by the fact that all 71 ecclesiastical provincial governors (and a few others appointed by the president) are permanent ex-officio members of the board. Also monks of *somdet* status become honorary members. The category of elected members (not exceeding in number the permanent members) is elected by the board for a tenure of four years. The day-to-day administration of the university is organized as in most universities, with a rector, deans, registrar, and so on – all in this case being monks.

Education is provided free (except for a very small nominal fee for provision of certain services). The financial resources of the university derive from a number of sources although they do not amount to much. The contributors are the government (from its annual budget), the sangha (from its ecclesiastical budget), the Asia Foundation, which has been from 1957 until very recently the largest donor, and private donations.

In 1968 the total fund available to Mahachula was 600,000 baht ($30,000) with which to teach 1,100 pupils and to engage in other educational activities (such as Sunday schools). The monk-teachers were paid only a miniscule stipend of 250–400 baht per month to help defray travel and food expenses. Phra Prayudh (1968) compared the paltry resources of Mahachula with the government-financed University of Fine Arts, which received 7,345,000 baht to teach 387 students. These facts and comparisons reinforce our earlier assertion that whatever the official governmental support for the sangha, the

[16] See Sarkisyanz (1965) for a sympathetic treatment of Burmese ideological formulations.

[1] Later in the reign this building became the National Library.

actual financial support it gives is meager for monks' education and for ecclesiastical administrative expenses.

By 1974 Mahachula's financial situation had somewhat improved in that it received an annual total of 1 million baht to meet the expenses – a sum that was considered barely enough. The government was now the chief contributor (750,000 baht), the sangha (ecclesiastical budget) the next (230,000 baht), and the Asia Foundation's contribution had decreased to 100,000.

The Mahachula Foundation (*munithi*) was initiated in 1965 and the interest from the capital is utilized to provide scholarships, to run the Sunday school, and to support other educational activities. Mahachula also runs a small printing establishment. (With respect to both the foundation and the printing press the Thammayut-run university is more fortunately supported as we shall see shortly.) By 1974 it was reported to me that the foundation was increasing its capital annually by about 300,000 baht.

Since Mahachula differs from the traditional monastic schools in that it strives to impart both Pali religious and secular knowledge to its students, its university structure is the apex standing on a base of lower educational levels, which is also its responsibility to provide. This is necessitated by the narrow educational background of most monks and novices.

As we have already seen, most monk-students join the order as young novices after completing the fourth grade of the secular elementary system. After ordination only some novices and monks may have instruction in Pali and pass one of the six *parian* grades (3–9); most have merely a *naktham* grade to their credit. However, since no secular subject is included in these Pali and *naktham* courses, the university must provide several years of preparatory education corresponding to the upper elementary and secondary levels of the secular system before allowing the students to enter either its teacher-training college or one of its four faculties. In thus duplicating the secular system, Mahachula also requires of its students that they are at each level instructed in Pali and dhamma as well.

Figure 18A.1 illustrates the way in which the various programs dovetail as a linear scheme. Those students who enter with merely the elementary fourth grade to their credit are subject to six years of study in the Pali Demonstration School (located at Wat Pho), where in addition to Pali and dhamma they cover the upper elementary and lower secondary grades.[2] Those who enter with the additional qualification of Pali grade 4 cover the same secular levels in two years.[3] Both streams then spend two years in the Pre-University School, where they cover the upper secondary grades.

Next in the hierarchy comes the Ecclesiastical Teacher-Training College, which offers in two years a certificate equivalent to the Higher Certificate of Education of the Ministry of Education. But those students who achieve a

[2] In 1971 Mahachula's Demonstration School was given special recognition by the Ministry of Education in that rather than sending candidates to sit the ministry's upper elementary and lower secondary examinations, the school was entitled to hold its own examinations, which were rated as equivalent to the secular counterparts. In 1971, apart from the main school in Bangkok, there were six branch schools operating, all in the northeast – in Nakhon Phanom (one), Ubon (two), Nongkhai (one), and Mahasarakham (two).

[3] The Pali Introductory School was the first to be inaugurated in 1947, followed by the Demonstration and the Pre-University schools in 1949. The first undergraduate class began in 1951.

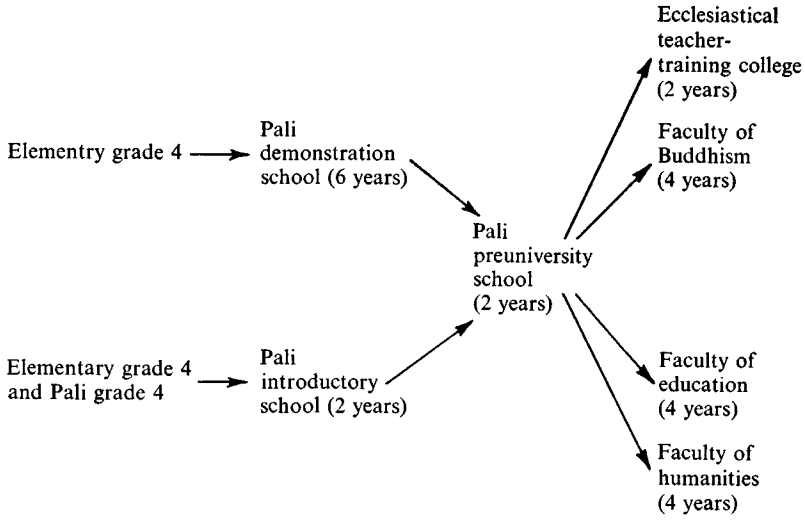

Ecclesiastical teacher-training college (2 years)
Elementry grade 4
Pali demonstration school (6 years)
Faculty of Buddhism (4 years)
Pali preuniversity school (2 years)
Elementary grade 4 and Pali grade 4
Pali introductory school (2 years)
Faculty of education (4 years)
Faculty of humanities (4 years)

Figure 18A.1. The educational program.

certain average may then, if they so wish, enter the faculty of education (at the third-year level) and receive the B.A. in education in two years. The Ecclesiastical Teacher-Training College, begun in 1963, had for its aim "to produce monastic teachers of the elementary level in response to the need of the nation for qualified teachers in provincial schools both monastic and secular" (Mahachula Catalog 1967–1968, p. 69). Graduates of the college are now entitled to teach at any level – elementary to upper secondary – in state schools.

Undergraduate education is divided among the three faculties and minimally extends over four years. The faculties are: (1) Buddhism consisting of four departments (Pali, Buddhism, religion and philosophy, indology); (2) education consisting of four departments (education, psychology, library science, mathematics and sciences); (3) humanities and social welfare again divided into four departments (Thai, English, Southeast Asia studies, social sciences).

As a matter of fact, before specializing in the last two years, all undergraduates must spend their first two years in the faculty of Buddhism. In 1971, the faculty of Buddhism was chiefly concerned with the study of philosophy, both Eastern and Western, the faculty of education with educational administration because it was felt that there was a great need to improve the organization of monastic and other schools in the provinces, and the faculty of humanities and social welfare with the study of English and sociology. In all the faculties and the teachers' college the number of lay instructors (many of whom were previously monks) exceeded the number of monk-educators (38 to 5 and 23 to 3 respectively), but in the lower schools the monk-teachers predominated.

The following statistics in Table 18.6 pertain to two selected years and give us some idea of the number of students enrolled and graduating.

The first B.A. degrees were granted in 1954 by the faculty of Buddhism: From 1954 to 1966, 124 degrees in Buddhism were granted. The first B.A. degrees in education were granted in 1963, and between 1963 and 1966, 65 degrees had

Table 18.6

Schools and faculties	Number of students			
	Enrolled		Receiving degree/certificate	
	1966	1971	1966	1971
The three faculties	183	234	34	38
Teacher-training college	58	46	16	20
Preuniversity school	206	238	66	100
Introductory school	311	225	134	134
Demonstration school	521	281	90	42
Total	1279	1024	340	334

been granted in that field. Humanities, the last to start, had from 1964 to 1966 granted 27 degrees.

We have at various places in this book indicated that the vast majority of the monks residing in the capital and studying in its monastic schools and monks' universities are of rural peasant origins. I cannot do better than cite Phra Wishudhimoli (Phra Prayudh) as to why the monastic institutions of higher learning must continue. With his characteristic command of facts and figures, he said:

> While 80% of Thailand's population is engaged in agriculture, only about 6% of the students in the secular universities is drawn from the rural-agricultural sector. The government has in the past spent and is also now spending much more money on the higher education of the underprivileged majority. Yet, ever since modern education was begun in the time of King Wachirawut, the gap in this country between the privileged and underprivileged has widened not narrowed.

Extracurricular Activities

Thammathud *and Community Development.* We have at some length described in Chapter 18 the participation of Mahachula senior undergraduates and graduates in the various *thammathud* programs and the character of the community development program (addressed to the training of provincial monk-volunteers in Bangkok) jointly run by Mahachula and Mahamakut universities. We have also reported the attitudes of Mahachula students to their vocational role in modern Thailand. In the four years 1963–1966, Mahachula sent some 63 monk-graduates to work in 26 provinces; in 1967–1968 about 47 monk-graduates were working in 23 provinces. These missionary monks worked under the direction of the provincial ecclesiastical governors. Their main duties were educational – teaching in monastic schools, teaching dhamma in secular schools when invited, founding Buddhist Sunday schools; additionally, some of them participated in community development programs. Their period of service rarely extended beyond one or two years.

Tripitaka *Revision and Publication Committee.* The production of revised editions of the *Tripitaka* is as we have already noted a hallowed tradition reactivated in periods of purification and revival of Buddhism. It was in King Chulalongkorn's reign that the first edition of the Pali canon was printed in Thai script (1896). This "Siam-Rath" edition of 39 volumes was again revised and reset in 45 volumes in 1926–1927 during the reign of Rama VII. Now again, since 1957, Mahachula has been engaged in producing a new revised authoritative version to commemorate the royal founder of the university and also to mark the completion of 2500 years of Buddhism. A number of volumes of the projected total of 45 have been published.

Buddhist Sunday School. The Sunday school idea no doubt stems from Christianity. Mahachula claims to have begun the first Buddhist Sunday school in 1958 when children of both sexes accompanied their parents to attend religious instruction given on Sundays.

The program was considered successful, and in 1959 the Buddhist Sunday school was made one of the chief activities of the Department of Research on Buddhism. With further increases in student numbers the Buddhist Sunday school was given the status of a separate school run by the university.

Religious instruction is provided for children and youth whose ages range from six to the early twenties. The classes are divided into four levels – primary, intermediate, high, and advanced – and they are subdivided further into grades. Classes are held from 9 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. on Sundays, totaling 120 class hours in an academic year. The total enrollment in 1967 was 1619 (798 males, 821 females); in 1971 it was 1456 (with a roughly equal sex distribution).

The main subjects of instruction are general morality and Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist history, and English readings in Buddhism. Inculcation of good manners, training in the practice of the Thai ceremonial, group cooperation, and social service are further objectives. The school prints a monthly magazine called *Pueon-Chai.* "When I visited the Mahachula Sunday school in the morning of December 12, 1971, I found that the central building was a beehive of buzzing noise. Some 12 classes were in session, taught by several monks (who were all students or graduates of Mahachula). The younger children were wearing uniforms – the girls in pink skirts and white blouses, the boys in white shorts and shirts and pink bow ties. I was told that the children were not charged any fees, but their parents may make donations."

The holding of Sunday schools has now become widespread in Bangkok-Thonburi. Besides Mahamakut University (Wat Bowonniwet), in 1971 I discovered that the following wat were sponsors: Benchamabopit, Yannawa, Anongkaram, Nakhlang, Suwanaram, Paknam, Bangpakok. (Outside the capital in Nonthaburi Wat Chalaw and Wat Cholprathan and in Prathumthani Wat Makam were also actively involved.) The propagation of dhamma, morals, social service, and so on, to the youth is like *thammathud* a manifestation of the activistic orientations among the new category of young educated monks.[4]

[4] In 1974 Phra Wisudhimsli of Mahachula informed me that Sunday schools have been mushrooming throughout the country, especially after the sending out of Mahachula graduates to work in the provinces. The difficulty faced by these schools was continuity, since the initiating graduates usually left after two years of service, thus creating the problem of replacing them with successors to continue their work. Apparently, the provincial monks themselves were not yet ready to take over the program.

The Mahamakut Buddhist University

The beginnings of Mahamakut University trace back to the 1890s when Prince Wachirayan became head of the Thammayut sect and founded the Mahamakut Academy, which led the way in instituting a number of improvements in monastic education, and undertook the running of model schools in other Thammayut wat and the conduct of examinations.[5]

Like Mahachula, Mahamakut was granted full university status in the mid-forties. It was founded by Wachirayan as an educational institution of the Thammayut sect, and it has continued to be of Thammayut affiliation, although monks from the Mahanikai are also admitted as students and comprise nearly one-half the current student body.

The Thammayut sect has an organization called the Mahamakut Educational Council, whose president is the head (*chaokhana yai*) of the sect (in 1971 he also happened to be the supreme patriarch). The council is the parent of the board of the Mahamakut Educational Council, which runs Mahamakut University. The board's president is again the Thammayut head, who appoints the board members, some 24 in number; they are composed of famous and learned monks drawn from both sects and of renowned laymen. The university is sited at Wat Bowonniwet, but some teaching also takes place at Wat Makut.

Of historical importance in the functioning of the Thammayut sect and Mahamakut University (and a resource that the sister university run by the Mahanikai has lacked until recently) was the establishment of the Mahamakut *munithi* (foundation/fund for charitable purposes) in B.E. 2435 (1892). Once again the head of the sect is the president of the special committee that manages the fund. There are lay and monk divisions of the committee, all the members being appointed by the head. The committee as a body meets three times a year, but the divisions and subcommittees more frequently. Although I have no information as regards its finances, it is common knowledge that the fund is handsomely large and that the *munithi* acts as a kind of banker to individual Thammayut monasteries who deposit their own monies and incomes with it. Although there is overlap of membership, the *munithi* is a separate organization from the board that runs the university and is one of the contributors to its finances.

The Mahamakut University in 1971 was financially supported by many sources: the largest contributor was the government (via the Department of Religious Affairs), the second largest the Asia Foundation, the third largest the *munithi*. Other smaller sources of money were the press run by the Mahamakut Educational Council (it publishes books and pamphlets) and contributions of laymen. The secretary general of the university informed me that the contribution of the *munithi* varies according to the amounts procured from other sources. It was expected that as the Asia Foundation's contributions decreased in future years, that of the *munithi* would increase.

The Educational Program

This university, as is the case with Mahachula, provides for more than the mere university stage of studies. There are in fact two programs: the chief one, lasting 7 years, whose entrants are monks and novices who have at least the Pali grade

[5] See Chapter 2; also Wyatt 1969, pp. 217–218, 241, 254.

4 or 5 and *naktham ek* qualifications, and the other, lasting 12 years, in which enlist newly ordained monks and novices with lesser qualifications. After the years of preparatory study, undergraduate instruction as such lasts four years. (There is also a third special program of studies, lasting four years, that caters to foreigners, primarily Europeans and Asians.)

Instruction is given by four departments – social sciences (sociology, education), philosophy (Buddhism, comparative religion), languages (Thai, Pali, French, German, Chinese), psychology (including biology and the physical sciences). English is compulsory and is taught in every department, especially in the final year; Thai and Pali are similarly compulsory for all students. An attempt is made to make students answer all papers (except Thai and Pali) for the final examination in English.

According to figures provided me by the secretary general, in 1971 about 600 monk-students were enrolled, equally distributed among the Mahanikai and Thammayut sects.

In the same year there were about 90 teachers, nearly one-half of whom were monks, nearly all ex-graduates of the university: Fifteen of them had M.A. degrees, 1 had the Ph.D., all (except one from Britain) obtained from India. But the majority of teachers at the undergraduate level were laymen, some of whom were ex-monks.

In the years 1969–1970, 29 and 19 graduates respectively were produced, most of them specializing in social sciences and philosophy. Since the founding of the university, some 300 monks in all had graduated.

Nowadays after the conclusion of the usual seven-year course of studies, the graduands are expected to spend one additional year (i.e., the eighth year) in the provinces engaged in practice (*prathiphat*), which means participation in *thammathud* work.[6]

Mahamakut University provides annually about two or three scholarships for its graduates to go to India to further their education. Indian universities (a preferred one is Benares) are chosen because admission is not difficult, because there are hostels and other facilities, especially as regards food, provided specially for monks, because "India is the initial source of Buddhism and it is a congenial country for practising the *vinaya*," as one informant put it.

The secretary general added that of the 300 or so monks who had graduated since the founding of the university some 26 years ago, only one-half of them were still in robes; those reassuming lay status had entered occupations such as chaplaincy in the armed services, teaching in schools and universities, government officers, and so on.[7] He said that "the monks who have left will set a good example in society: Their behavior will be exemplary because they have spent at least 13 years in robes."

[6] As stated earlier, this may involve participation in development activities; teaching in schools, both lay and monastic, secular subjects as well as dhamma; and the founding of Buddhist Sunday schools. The provincial ecclesiastical governor applies to the university which sends monks to work under him.

[7] Here is a good example of a career that follows the same trajectory as many others we have documented: G is 34 years old, and when I met him in 1971, he had just married. He was born in Udorn province in the northeast, served as novice for 5 years and monk for 15 years. While in Bangkok he resided at the Thammayut monastery called Wat Boromanivas. He received the B.A. from Mahamakut in 1964, then spent two years in India at the University of Benares and became a layman in 1971. He is now an official in the Department of Religious Affairs and also teaches sociology at Mahamakut University.

The University's Activities

The secretary general reported to me that the university engaged in 23 categories of activities, of which 20 are concerned with the society at large. The three activities internal to the university he enumerated were the education of monks, provision of facilities to and ensuring the protection of monks, and the production of textbooks.

Of the external activities the following are the most important:

1. About 70 *mae chi* (nuns) residing in many Bangkok wat (none resides at Wat Bowonniwet itself) attend a special education program devised for them that includes subjects such as Pali, English, science, home economics, first aid.

2. Dhamma is taught every Tuesday to groups of graduate women who subsequently teach dhamma to others.

3. In Sunday school about 1500 students of both sexes, 7 to 16 years of age, are taught dhamma and other subjects. I was told that "they are also taught to preserve the cultural identity of the nation and to contribute to the well-being of the society." There was also instruction in elocution so that students could effectively teach others.

4. Mahamakut has a joint community development program with Mahachula. It has also participated independently in the Department of Religious Affairs-sponsored *thammathud* work. This provides the one-year practice that all graduating monks must perform in the provinces. In addition, groups of monks may (after special instruction) be sent for short periods of time to deal with certain provincial problems in conjunction with government officials.

5. There are activities that pertain in particular to the Thammayut *nikai.* An example was the elaborate Wachirayan commemoration (his 50th death anniversary) that was staged in 1971 and was opened by the king and queen. It happens that I attended this exhibition on July 3, and the following is an excerpt from my notes:

> The exhibition in commemoration of Patriarch Wachirayan, Mongkut's son and a princely half-brother of King Chulalongkorn, appears to be a proud statement of the achievements of the sangha in general and the Thammayut sect in particular.
>
> Many monks were on duty and were most helpful to the visitors. The pride of place went to a room devoted to memorabilia associated with Wachirayan; there were, however, several other rooms displaying Buddhist literature and texts, monks' costumes and insignias of office, particularly fans. Each of the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Mon sects of Buddhism had a room exhibiting varied items associated with its distinctiveness. There was also a room providing information and pictures about meditation.
>
> One of the things that struck me was the sale of medallions and amulets that had been blessed by monks. Two kinds of medallions in memory of Wachirayan and two commemorating the Buddha were specially minted for the exhibition; I was told that a special ceremony for blessing the medallions was held in the *bod* of Wat Bowonniwet on June 17 and that 15 officiating monks were invited from several different monasteries.
>
> In addition to these, there were other medallions and amulets being sold – on which were stamped the images of, for example, the Emerald Buddha, the first king of Sukhodaya, Somdet Puddhakosachan.

19. The Politics of National Development and the Symbols of Legitimacy

To evaluate fully the nature and degree of the sangha's legitimation of the polity today in Thailand, we must first see the polity for what it is. The revolution of 1932, its social origins and the course that it took, provides us with some paradoxes and ambiguities that provide the key to the understanding of the stock of symbols that gives meaning to politics today and which in turn is actively manipulated by those in power.

We have already noted the social origins of the promoters of the revolution.[1] They represent the newly educated army officers and civilians of commoner status whose object was to push aside the absolute monarch and his royal princes and select nobles, and to exercise their power.[2] Note that their constituncy was (and has been ever since) the armed services, the civil service, and members of the governmental bureaucracy (and also the professions that usually have governmental association); they have never represented in any direct sense the masses, especially the rural population. We have also already noted the second feature about the revolution: It progressively became dominated by cliques of the armed forces whose form of government from 1939 to 1944, and then again from 1950 to the present, has taken an unambiguously authoritarian character.

But the paradoxical element is that the revolution of 1932 introduced into Thai politics certain ideas that have served as political values and symbols that are periodically invoked and manifest salience even as the generals periodically violate them. The symbols in question are the assembly of people's representatives, the constitution, and the constitutional monarchy. A pamphlet was distributed in Bangkok a few hours after the 1932 coup, and later it was radiobroadcasted twice to the nation at large. Having explained why power had to be seized from the king and "his relatives and friends" and having asserted that "this country belongs to the people," the pamphlet declared:

For these reasons the people, civil officials, the army, and the navy, have formed a People's Party and have seized the powers of government. The People's Party

[1] See Wilson (1962, Ch. 4) for biographical details of some of the leaders.

[2] Indeed, it appears that some 20 years earlier, in 1912, there was an abortive coup planned by military officers and some civilians; their aim was to capture King Wachirawut and to compel him to accept a constitution or to replace him if he refused (Phra Sarasas 1953).

feels that the way to alleviate conditions is to establish an assembly which can include the best thinking of many minds. . . . As to the chairman or president of the nation, the People's Party . . . has invited King Prajadhipok to continue to be king under a constitution.[3]

Between 1932 and 1971 Thailand has had a turnover of eight constitutions (some of which were labeled "provisional"); and, correspondingly, the popularly elected assembly has been periodically dissolved, often as a direct result of a new coup or a shift of power. Nevertheless, that newer and better constitutions to suit the temper of the country, and more representative as well as responsible assemblies have been promised after each coup is a telling indication of the fact that the notions of assembly and constitution are components – albeit irritating components to the generals – of the prevailing political norms and ideas.

But since the late fifties, especially during the Sarit era (and subsequently), certain other political labels have also been invoked as symbols to initiate, explain, or defend political actions. Sarit's suppression of constitutionalists was done in the name of "national development" (*kaan phathana prathet*), "national integration," and the peril (both internal and external) of "communism." The Sarit ideology moreover not only depressed the status of the revolution symbols and in their place emphasized national development symbols but also made a special effort to invoke and popularize perhaps the oldest and most potent of Thai prerevolutionary collective symbols – namely, king and religion. And this neotraditional stance of Sarit appears to employ the strategy of invoking the king and religion as the collective identity symbols of the nation, in whose aura, so to say, certain politico-economic objectives of development and integration were promoted. In concrete terms national development means, apart from the insatiable build-up of the armed forces and weaponry, the construction of roads and dams, the introduction of rural development (accelerated and otherwise), the expansion of education, the extension of bureaucratic capitalism, and the sponsoring of economic schemes by government ministers and departments, part beneficiaries of whose profits are the politicians and bureaucrats themselves.

Under the flag of national integration is advocated a policy of politically integrating the country – it ranges from appeasing and developing the northeast, to spreading the Thai language among the Luo speakers and southern Muslims, to resettling forcefully migratory tribal groups and taking to them Thai culture, language, and religion. Thus in a sense the old symbols of king and religion are carrying a semantic load of "Thai-isation" and national development appropriate to the political and economic tasks and ventures of the twentieth century, some of which are altogether new and nontraditional. At the same time, the democracy symbols of the thirties have continued to have a shadowy existence side by side with the newer ones and were periodically invoked for all kinds of purposes and in

[3] The pamphlet is reported in full in Landon (1939), pp. 11–12.

various situations, even by those who are antagonistic to their substantive realization.

King Wachirawut's Legacy

In actual fact the content of the greater portion of the Sarit ideology – which invokes king, religion, national development, integration, and defense – is in line with certain of Thailand's past propensities and represents continuities that are for that reason practically efficacious.

Let me very briefly allude to some of the trends and circumstances of the immediate past, from the 1920s onward, so that we can properly situate the political ideology of the present. In King Wachirawut's reign (1910–1925) were propagated certain ideas that were later extended and amplified in the Phibun and Sarit military regimes. Wachirawut was a controversial figure. He is variously described as a talented poet, dramatist, and moralist and as a generous and extravagant person who consorted with young male favorites and removed himself from real politics.[4] Nevertheless, Wachirawut clearly emerges as having injected into Thai collective consciousness certain new potent ideas of *nationalism*, which, on the one hand, conjoined the concept of nation to the older symbols of king and religion and, on the other, mobilized all these symbols in the service of national development and improvement, which if achieved it was believed would place Thailand in the forefront of progressive countries.

The creation of a spirit of nationalism and national allegiance that was somewhat more potent than the traditional call of allegiance toward king and religion is perhaps Wachirawut's chief contribution to the political life of the country. In certain respects Wachirawut paraded as a militarist. He had been educated at Oxford and trained at Sandhurst military academy; he considered himself a soldier and took a personal interest in military affairs. The military was apparently a source of pride to the government of the 1920s, a pride that was enhanced by the king's commitment of a small expeditionary force to take part in World War I on the side of the Allies.

It was in this atmosphere of military parades and colorful uniforms that Wachirawut introduced a significant mobilization effort. This was the formation of the Wild Tiger Corps (*sua pa*), a paramilitary organization, in order to arouse a spirit of nationalism among the people. The participants were of course not the people at large but the civil servants and courtiers. Bureaucrats and other leading citizens were encouraged to join, and membership became something of a social distinction. Its spirit was an amalgam of foreign ideas and slogans of Thai nationalism. In its organization the inspirational discipline of a British regiment was combined with the self-improvement attitudes of the Boy Scouts. Along with the adult

[4] See, for example, Phra Sarasas' (1953) denunciation of this king.

Wild Tiger Corps, long since disappeared from the Thai scene, the king also founded the Tiger Cubs (*luk sua*), which continues today as the government-sponsored Boy Scouts movement (Wilson 1962, p. 110). The king's proclamation gave the following reasons for the formation of the Wild Tiger Corps: to develop feelings of loyalty among Thai people and their leaders, "to love the nation and respect the religion," and, finally, "to feel unity with the group." Troops of the Wild Tiger Corps were recruited and organized in Bangkok and the provinces; the king "drilled personally with the Bangkok troop and wrote much inspirational literature for the edification of the members. The themes of this literature were loyalty to religion, king, and nation . . . and service to the community" (Wilson, p. 111).

Wachirawut's call to the Thai nation to cooperate for achieving progress and "to feel unity with the group" had two edges to it. One was that it was a defiant stance against the constant pressures on the part of European colonial powers to diminish the territory of Thailand (apparently Wachirawut's early writings on the Wild Tiger Corps "were sprinkled with refusals to sacrifice another inch of territory" (Wilson, p. 111). The second was the feeling that the Chinese minority in Thailand was exploiting the Thai and were strangers to the concept of loyalty to nation. Thus it is a coherent part of the Wachirawut syndrome that he was the promoter of an anti-Chinese stance and propaganda – indeed, he wrote a pamphlet about them called "The Jews of the East" – a position that has been repeated and exploited at advantageous moments by various recent military governments, particularly those of Phibul and Sarit.

Wilson sums up the political impact of Wachirawut thus:

> Rama VI was one of the outstanding early Asian nationalists. . . . The slogans and symbols which he developed – religion, king, and nation; the attitude that the Thai should justify their nationhood by their progressiveness and adaptation of Western standards; and the fear of the Chinese role in the country – all remain today as potent instruments and ideas. This king was and is a figure of controversy. . . . But his influence on modern Thailand is unmistakable (p. 112).

Frank Reynolds, discussing the role of Wachirawut under the aspect of civil religion, judges that the traditional pattern of civil religion in Thailand was "given a new and highly influential formulation by King Vajirawut." Reynolds also says that Wachirawut developed three foci of Thai civil religion: the *sasana* or Buddhism, the nation (*chat*), and the monarchy (*phra maha kasat*).

> Both in the tradition as a whole, and in Vajirawut's particular formulation of it, the three realities constitute the pillars of a distinctive religious structure which are involved with and interact with Buddhism, primordial religious and communal values, and the political expression of the state, but which has, nevertheless, an independence and integrity of its own. It is this distinctive and

independent religious structure which Vajirawut sought to represent when he designed the Thai national flag with its white stripe which signifies Buddhism, its red stripe which signifies the people or nation as such, and its blue stripe which represents the monarchy.

If I may express the foregoing in my own way, Wachirawut's contribution can be stated as follows: We know that historically the Theravada Buddhist polities located in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and so on, had a composite ideology and charter (that derived from common sources) that said that the Buddhist religion's guardianship had been specially entrusted to particular collectivities whose identity was compounded of religion, kingship, language, and ethnic membership. To this complex of values Wachirawut contributed, firstly, an added and perhaps new stress on nation, national interest (particularly territory), and national unity; secondly, he helped differentiate a political expression of the polity that permits a greater mobilization of the public on the basis of appeals directed to them as a nation.

It is clear that such collective sentiments were intimately linked with the Thai royal court's sense of humiliation as regards its territorial ambitions at the hands of colonial powers, especially the French and to a lesser extent the British, and, concurrently, its growing compensatory confidence that Siam was one of the few Asian countries that had successfully withstood imperialist annihilation. The court was aware that the country was gradually growing the muscle with which it could hope to reclaim its lost territories.

In the 1860s, when Mongkut was under pressure from both the French and British, he wrote that his dilemma was, "whether to swim up-river to make friends with the crocodile or to swim out to sea and hang on to the whale . . ." (Moffat 1961, p. 124). The most recent humiliations suffered by Thailand were at the hands of the French, who were determined to offset British successes in Burma with their own territorial seizure on Thailand's eastern flanks. In 1867 Thailand ceded Cambodia to France under protest, excepting the four provinces of Battambang, Siemreap, Sisophon, and Melouprey. The Sipsong Chao Thai area in North Vietnam was surrendered in 1888. The major humiliation was the signing of the treaty of 1893, under threat of a military ultimatum issued by two warships steaming upriver to Bangkok, by which Thailand ceded all of the Laotian territory on the left bank of the Mekhong. Finally, the French took control by the treaty of 1904 of two provinces on the right bank of the Mekhong (Sayaboury and Campasak) and by 1907 had succeeded in the last remaining extortion – namely, the four Cambodian provinces that the Thai were able to salvage in 1867, in return for their foregoing of extraterritorial jurisdiction over their Asian subjects in Thailand. The British followed this up two years later by making Thailand cede its claims over the Malay States of Kelantan, Trengganu, Kedah, and Perlis in exchange for the aboltion of their extraterritorial rights. Despite these cessions Thailand has not only

survived but gone on to stabilize and even modernize.[5] And the awakening sensation of military strength, which Wachirawut expressed in his conception of nation, was also accompanied by ambitions for the recovery of lost territories. These ambitions took on an expansionist coloring in the thirties, just before the outbreak of the World War, during the Phibul regime in the form of a Pan-Thai ideology.

The Pan-Thai Movement

It is said that "the apostle of the new nationalism" who glorified the new Siam and served as its official propagandist was Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn, who had been educated in France and was, like Phibul and Pridi, of half-Chinese extraction and who, after being a newspaperman, held for a time the position of director-general of the Fine Arts Department. Though a controversial figure – one contemporary European observer (Landon 1939) called him a "talented writer," while another (Coast 1953) deprecated his "writing catchy popular songs and rehashing other people's ideas with his own in a spate of superficial books" – it is clear that he was an effective propagandist not only of anti-Chinese doctrines but also of Thailand's political ambitions. Crosby called him the "high priest" of the new movement and said: "He has a talent for musical composition and has produced a number of popular songs, besides writing several historical dramas of less merit which have owed their success to the fact of their being blatant instruments of propaganda for the Pan Thai movement" (1945, p. 107).

In his quarters in the Fine Arts Department, Vichitr manufactured a doctrine of Pan-Thaism. His Pan-Thai philosophy had a concrete aim. It substituted the word "Thai" for "Siamese" and then argued that many Thais speaking a Thai language and possessing a Thai culture lived outside Thailand under oppressive foreign rule. Some of them lived in Laos, some in South China, and some in the Shan states of Burma. All of them, it was claimed, should live in "Thai-land" (Coast, p. 15). This expansionary dogma even went so far as to claim on historical grounds certain non-Thai territories such as parts of southern Burma, and the four northern Muslim-dominated states of Malaya. (The claims over the Shan states, Laos, and certain Cambodian provinces met the affinity criterion more plausibly.)[6]

It is these Pan-Thai political aspirations that partly illuminate Thailand's stance vis-à-vis Japan in World War II. For one thing, we should bear in mind that in 1939 there was a worldwide feverish military activity. In Thailand, Phibul's military regime in moving with the times continually inflated the budget of the Ministry of Defense until it totaled one-third of the national income. For another, we should appreciate what Japan symbolized

[5] As noted in Chapter 11, Damrong's provincial administrative reforms (1893–1915) were undertaken to secure the kingdom's territories and to tighten control over them. However, the border regions mentioned previously had to be ceded.

[6] See Crosby (1945), Chs. 7–14 for a discussion of Pan-Thai chauvinism.

for Asian nationalists in general and promised Thailand's nationalism in particular.

It is part of Western bias and received wisdom to view Thailand's cooperation with the Japanese during World War II (while at the same time harboring the Free Thai movement working in collusion with the Allies) with a certain amount of sniggering malice and self-interested myopia. We have witnessed since the end of the war these same Western powers giving the rest of the world an object lesson in realpolitik, proving the old adage that in diplomacy there are no permanent friends or allies, only interests. We are, therefore, more realistically able to see today some of the considerations that shaped Thailand's stance during that war. The Russo-Japanese war, Japan's industrialization, and the China "incident" had impressed on the Thais, as on many Orientals, the fact that the Japanese were a tough, organized, coming race in Eastern affairs (Coast 1953, p. 10) that might offer a real balance to the threats of the imperialists, notably the French, the British, and the Dutch. And certain nationalist and anticolonialist groups in many Asian countries saw Japan as "the symbol of what independence and industrialization could do for them; in spite of Japanese behaviour in China, Japan was thought to offer hope" (p. 15). Thailand's attitude to Japan was favorable insofar as its own military regime under Philbul corresponded with the authoritarian regime in Japan. It was calculated that Japan's military might and expansionary designs could further Thailand's recovery of its lost territories, especially those lying east of the Mekhong, a calculation fostered and encouraged by Japan in turn. And in this respect Thailand's hopes were not mistaken when in 1941, after the fall of France in Europe, Prince Warn Waidayakorn (one of Thailand's most able and respected diplomats, who held at this time the combined appointment of adviser to the cabinet and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) successfully pleaded his country's cause in Tokyo and recovered a large block of lost territory (the provinces of Battambang, Siemrap, and Sisiphon, but not Cambodia proper). We should not of course minimize Thailand's ambivalence toward collaborating with Japan – its real commitment to neutrality in the face of competing powers, the pro-Western attitudes of its princes and educated elite (most of whom had been educated in the West), and its aesthetic dislike of certain aggressive features of Japanese commercial, cultural, and military expansion.[7] For instance, Phibul's decrees that the Thai imitate the Westerner sartorially is a curiously revealing folly.

My intention here is by no means to devalue the anti-Japanese and pro-Western attitudes of the Free Thai movement leaders (particularly Pridi and Seni Pramoj and others) nor the anti-Fascist position they took. It is rather to seek an answer to the emergence of a militaristic and authoritarian regime out of the hopeful times of the constitutional area. The

[7] See Crosby (1945) for an account of Thailand's "neutrality" and how it came to accommodate the inevitable presence of the Japanese.

answer must also examine whether this emergence was somehow a result that was concordant with Thailand's past propensities acting upon the more recent and immediate political events generated since the thirties by international powers.

Soon after 1937 Thailand achieved a measure of self-esteem when revised treaties were negotiated by Pridi with Britain, France, the United States, and Germany, treaties that marked the end of extraterritorial privileges (over their subjects) and gave the country a large measure of substantive sovereignty.

Post–World War II Politics

It is clear that the irredentist ambitions of the Pan-Thai movement before the outbreak of World War II, irrespective of its political feasibility, ideologically matched the proclivities of the military regime that emerged under Phibul in the 1930s. This political structure was further aided by the events of World War II. And in a sense Thailand's self-conscious expansionary nationalism, first kindled by Wachirawut, symbolically took flame when Phibul officially changed the English nomenclature of the country from Siam to Thailand and its people from Siamese to Thai.[8] In the Phibul era during the war Wachirawut's Tiger Cubs were succeeded by the *Yuvachon* or young Thai movement, composed of school and university students and subjected to military drill and lectures on patriotism. (There even grew up a parallel organization for girl students who were trained in nursing.)

Looking back at the postwar years, especially 1944–1949, from this perspective, when Phibul and his militarist collaborators were in disgrace and the Pridi and other civilian elements in the ascendant, we cannot but see them as an interlude that was a possible turning point but was doomed to be submerged by the weight of political tradition in Thailand and the pressures exerted by foreign powers. Released from prison in 1946, Phibul was in the 1950s rehabilitated and internationally supported by the United States and certain other powers that had only a few years earlier subjected him to a period of disgrace. Pridi was irreversibly ejected from Thailand's politics; but in turn Phibul and his police general, Phao were, in due course, from 1957 onward, replaced by a stronger version of their own militarism whose chief exponent was Sarit (and his associates Thanom Kittikachon and Prapass). Once again the actions of international powers in pursuit of their own political interests connived at establishing and reinforcing an emerging political structure in Thailand that at least in the short run had virtually stamped out other rival political interests championing more civilian control of governmental processes. I refer here to the role of the

[8] This usage it must be pointed out is in line with traditional Thai linguistic usages such as "Muang Thai" or "Prathet Thai" for their country and "Thai" for themselves as the people.

Vietnam War and U.S. military aid to Thailand in forging a powerful army. The use of Thailand by the United States as a base for its war operations provided the material and logistical support together with a save-the-country-from-communism ideology for buttressing and giving political stability to the ruling group to a degree unknown in the 1930s and 1940s. Thus out of the instabilities and oscillations of the 1930s emerged the militarism of the early 1940s and its revival in the 1950s. Thereafter, this army-controlled authoritarianism progressed to becoming a seemingly stable form, which reached its apogee under Sarit and later under his successors (1972).

This last stage of maturation and sharpening of the political system is characterized by an unashamed appreciation of the power and force wielded by the army. It is also simultaneously matched by the appreciation of the value of certain traditional symbols and institutions such as king and religion to which collective sentiments are strongly attached and which therefore provide certain legitimating ideas for and of political life.

But this gradual development of a seemingly stable system of political control in the period extending from the 1930s to the early 1970s can up to a point be located within a recurring political pattern whose logic is partially answered in terms of the persistence of traditional forms and propensities that have perennially manifested themselves in Southeast Asian politics.

A list of prime ministers from June 1932 to the present would contain the names of some 15 persons, some of whom held office more than once and a large number of whom held office for very short periods of time. (The length of tenure of at least six of those prime ministers was less than six months, and of another three a year or less.)[9] Furthermore, during this same period there were about four shifts of power signaled by revolutions (*kam pathiwat*) or coups d'état (*kan rathaprahan*) that resulted in substantial changes in the personnel of the ruling group (including high government officials); another four coups or suppressed rebellions (*kabot*) failed; and there were approximately three seizures of power (*yut amnat*) by which "the new ruling group feels the consolidation of its position and moves to change the rules" (Wilson 1962, p. 262). The last seizure of power was in 1971 when Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachon and General Prapass, calling themselves the revolutionary group, dissolved the Assembly, suspended the constitution, and extruded from the ruling cabinet certain unwanted civilians and outmaneuvered generals.

Next we should note that these shifts of power and rapid turnover of prime ministers, though effected through the show of force and violence (though the actual spilling of blood was minimal or practically nonexistent), were acquiesced in or submitted to by the Thai people at large with

[9] See Wilson (1962), p. 139, for a list of prime ministers and their periods of tenure from 1932 to 1959 and p. 254 passim for the shifts in power and the use of force or violence.

a fair measure of equanimity. A decision of the supreme court on coup d'état is worth citing in our attempt to understand this attitude:

> The overthrow of a previous government and establishment of a new government by the use of force is perhaps illegal in the beginning until the people are willing to accept and respect it. When it is a government in fact, which means that the people have been willing to accept and respect it, any person who attempts by rebellion to overthrow that government violates the criminal law.[10]

Wilson interprets this decision as "a recognition of the real fact that the government as an institution is sovereign and he who controls it is legitimate" (p. 358) and also remarks that

> the receptivity of the public to this process of reconciliation is an extraordinary element in the Thai political system. It would appear that such receptivity is not merely resignation in the face of the inevitable but rather the belief that coups are right and proper . . . ultimately even those most committed to law and order incline to accept coups as the proper way to right the world's wrongs (p. 269).

This line of thought seems to accord with the kind of exegesis that says that Thai ideas unite the effectiveness stemming from *bun* (merit and virtue) with that deriving from amoral power (*rit, khaeng raeng, amnaad*) or appreciate both that right is might and that might effectively employed could be virtuous (Hanks 1962). Now both the frequent occurrence of coups in the past and their untraumatic acceptance by the people at large can be understood *in a short-term perspective* as fitting into a political context in which the effective political action happens among factions (*khana*) within the ruling military and civilian elements, whose immediate constituency is the bureaucracy and the civil service, which with each coup they are able to conciliate and purify (by expelling disaffected persons) at the same time. The relation of those factions to the masses, whether rural peasantry or urban commercial segments and workers, is indirect and unimportant as far as the question of legitimating their position and the exercise of their power is concerned. And successful shifts in power through coups have always been publicly legitimated by the incoming rulers seeking and receiving an amnesty and pardon from the throne and an ex post facto authorization in legal form for their actions. The precedent for this granting of the king's pardon is the elaborate ceremony of apology and reconciliation between King Rama VII and the promoters of the revolution of 1932, after the revolution had succeeded.

The Problem of Legitimacy

But we need not stop here and can proceed to view those repetitive events and proclivities *in a longer-term perspective* that harks back to the monarchical era extending far back into the mists of historical and mythologi-

[10] Quoted by Wilson, p. 269, from the *Decisions of the Dika*, B.E. 2495 (A.D. 1952).

cal incertitude. As we have already noted in our characterization of the traditional polity, a striking paradox and dialectical theme was the coexistence of divine kingship and political insurrection. The divinization of Southeast Asian monarchs; the equation of their palaces resting on top of Meru with the center of the universe; the sacralization rituals conducted on behalf of kings by court brahmans; the Buddhist conception that identifies kings with the wheel-rolling *cakkavatti* on the one side and *bodhisattva* on the other; and the further fusion of the Buddhist concept of *dharmaraja* with the Hindu-Mahayanist god-king *devaraja* in the courts of Cambodia and Thailand: All these are well developed in the literature and have been adverted to earlier.

But what is less fully considered is that this majestic conception of power harnessed to the chariot of dharma – an ideology that provided a model of the polity and commanded political loyalty and service – has always coexisted with a political arrangement that was galactic, not monolithic, and a political actuality that was unstable, often cataclysmic, and rarely guaranteeing durable peace for those in power. The heads of kings rolled frequently because succession rules were vague, rebellious, endemic, the overall political scaffolding fragile, and the territorial limits expanding and contracting with the military fortunes of the ruler, his subordinate chiefs, and his rivals. In the case of Thailand, Wood's *A History of Siam* (1924), which focuses primarily on the Ayutthaya period, turns out to be a not unfamiliar tale of usurpations and assassinations of kings by their rivals, be they brothers, sons, or some other claimant; of royal brothers by different mothers contending for the throne; of *uparats* and heirs apparent locked in battle; of uncles (king's brothers) and nephews (king's sons) shedding one another's blood. In fact it could be said of traditional Southeast Asian polities that a stream of spilt blood rather than a genealogically based rule of succession linked the succession of kings. Nevertheless, from time to time from this turbulent sea rose islands of stability and glory ruled by brave warriors and lavish builders of palaces and temples, observers of dharmic law and purifiers of morals, who exemplified the ideal kingly conception and were immortalized in priestly chronicles. For classical Sinhala times the heroic figures of Duttha Gamini or Parakrama Bahu or, for Ayutthayan times, of Naresuan and Narai parade before us to sustain the kingly ideals (however inglorious the last chapter of their lives may have been). And in some respects they all tried to live up to the classical model publicized by Emperor Asoka himself.

It is precisely because the recruitment of kings was contentious that whoever ascended the throne subsequently sought to be legitimated by the Buddhist sangha and divinized by court functionaries. The political weakness is not unconnected to the ritual elaboration of events such as the installation ceremony. (In addition, of course, a charismatic usurper often sought also to prove retroactively his hereditary claims by inventing claims of being of "the royal bone" and by marrying a royal woman.) Given this

historical precedent, coups d'état, political assassinations, the toppling of governments in present-day politics, and the countertheme of divinizing successful politicians dead or alive should not altogether appear incongruous. U Nu was considered by many Burmese as a saint and as the long-awaited messianic ruler, Maitriya, because it was alleged he practiced *ahimsa* and benevolent politics. But he was toppled and now lives in banishment. Bandaranaike was considered by some as Diyasena, the king who would initiate the new Buddhist era, but he was assassinated by a monk and has subsequently been deified as a Bandara guardian deity. Finally, to give a Thai example, Field Marshal Sarit, though no halo surrounded his strong-arm exercise of power, nevertheless commanded obedience on the premise that he guaranteed law and order, the continuance and protection of kingship and Buddhism, and the freedom of the nation against Communist incursion; but he was no sooner dead than he was personally discredited for amassing a fortune through corrupt practices.

The foregoing account of recurring coups d'état in modern times and their similarity to palace revolts in earlier times does raise the issue of the Thai conception of legitimacy and the validation of power.

Does Wilson's inference from the 1952 supreme court decision that the Thais believe that coups are right and proper imply that other than might is right there are no canons of legitimacy in Thai political traditions? Such an inference of amorality counters our fundamental thesis of a deep-rooted Buddhist conception of kingship, polity, and ethic of action.

In addition to the traditions of divinization and *bodhisattva*-ship, there is also in Buddhist countries another mythological tradition that advocates a social contract theory of kingship. The *dhammathat* literature of Burma, the *thammasat* of Thailand – both being derived from the Indian precedent of legal treatises (dharmashastra) – and the parallel text called the *Nitinighanduva* in Ceylon contain a Buddhist version of the origins of society that ultimately derives from the canonical myth of genesis contained in the *Agganna Suttanta* (Chapter 2). To recapitulate briefly, according to this view, the progressive degeneracy of man created the need for government, which, in turn, led to the election by men of the first king, Mahasammata. Moreover, this elective theory of kingship is counterbalanced by asserting at the same time that Mahasammata was a virtuous man, an embodiment of dharma and destined to become a Buddha; and that it was as his minister that the sage Manu discovered the perfect law. Thus we see how a contractual theory of government is yoked to the charismatic properties of kingship, thereby constantly compelling the pragmatics of politics to measure itself against an enduring standard.

The most illustrious of the Chakkri kings such as Mongkut and Chulalongkorn have left behind in Thai collective consciousness a strong image of enlightened kingship that realized itself in the shaping of the Thai nation and its territory. The line of Chakkri kings is the maker of modern Thailand. But of course in the recent past, kingship has been

diminished as a politico-religious entity, the actual political role in its authoritarian aspects being wielded by the army and the bureaucratic elite. But we cannot overlook the implicit understandings that allow the present system to work, such as the convention (which reflects in a sense his ordinating role) that the generals seek the king's consent after each change of power, however uneasily it may be given; nor can we overlook the importance of the public expectation that the king has the historic hereditary moral capacity and even duty to intervene decisively at crisis points, if only to retreat into his detached benignity afterward. Thus the shifting sands of the authoritarian regime rest on a bedrock of ideas that may not be obvious and that may be temporarily lost to view in the bustle of everyday political life.

Apart from the dharma of kingship, there is a body of concepts – "merit" and "power" as singled out in Hanks' classic essay (1962) – that are vital in judging and evaluating the careers of politicians and rich men and in accounting for their rise and fall. They constitute important measuring rods of achievement and performance.

Hanks' beginning postulate that in both the cosmic and the human orders the Thais tend to see deity, person, or spirit as always gaining or losing merit, and therefore as not rooted in permanent rank, is largely true. Concepts such as *bun* (merit), *khwaam di* (virtue), and *baap* (demerit) signify a person's moral and social state. It thus follows, says Hanks, that "because of his greater merit, a rich man is more effective than a poor man and freer from suffering" (p. 1248). The thrust of these observations is to highlight the basic Thai perception and conception of persons and units as being in flow, rising and falling, which correlates with the principles and processes of group affiliation and termination, of social movement and mobility, of the trajectories of individuals' careers and change of titles and name identities.

Having, with justification, placed merit (*bun*) in the forefront of Thai ideology, Hanks problematically invokes a Thai notion of power, expressed in words such as *amnaad, khaeng, khaeng raeng,* which is alleged to have "the same amoral implication as the English word" (p. 1254). His gloss of power is on slippery ground: The effectiveness of power, we are told, is in principle distinguishable from effectiveness through merit, though in practice the separation is difficult; again, later that "the merit-based hierarchy represents the fixed field in which action occurs" and that power only "blurs the clear edges of cosmic justice" (p. 1256). Hanks sees the following as expressions of power: "Amulets, tatooed marks, verbal formulae, and a host of other devices enable the gambler to win, the boxer to beat his opponent, the soldier to win in battle, and the physician to cure a patient" (p. 1254). Also, spirit offerings help ensure the outcome of critical undertakings.

We cannot for several reasons agree with Hanks' separating out an amoral sphere of power from the ambit of virtue and merit. Rather, merit

and power concepts comprise a set or domain related according to mutuality, hierarchy, and tension. The problem of the correct rendering of the Thai conception from their point of view is further compounded by Hanks' grouping a number of Thai concepts as signifying power, strictly speaking a mistranslation, since the Thais cannot be assumed to have an equivalent word for this Western concept. Rather, the Thais have a number of concepts for speaking about notions similar to the English ones of charisma, efficacy, influence, power, impulsion, and so on. A partial glossary is *rit* or *saksid, anuphab, bun, amnaad, khaeng raeng,* and all these lexemes portray differences in the modes of acquisition of the propensity in question and its ethical evaluation.[11] Thus instruments such as amulets and verbal formulas (which for Hanks are linked to amoral power) are not necessarily seen as working in defiance of the laws of merit-demerit and of karma but within their limits and "with the grain" of merit (as Nagasena himself explained long ago in *The Questions of King Milinda*).[12]

It is a partial account to substantialize power, to focus on amulets, magical words, tatoo marks, diagrams, and a host of other devices as embodiments of power as though they exist as separate concrete entities. We violate the general idiom of South and Southeast Asia when we separate these substances, objects, and vehicles from the agents, whether divine or human, who are their givers or takers. In other words, these substances get their potency in large part because of the virtues transferred to them by the originator or transmitter (e.g., the guru, yogi, bhikkhu), who acquires mystical powers through ascetic practices, special knowledge, or moral conduct. These substances in turn convey their potency to the recipient or donee, who also must fulfill certain conditions of virtue and felicity if the potency is to take effect. This is why the teacher-disciple, leader-follower, expert-apprentice relationships are emphasized in every sphere. In other words, the instruments of power take their place within a matrix of transactions, in which substances and vehicles, which encode moral virtues and "code for conduct," are exchanged among persons, among groups, or even

[11] For example, *rit* (*ithirit*)/*sakisid* are certain supernormal abilities (like being able to fly, to remember previous births, etc.) that are gained through meditation and ascetic practices. They are available to any man practicing these. *Anuphab* is an elevated word used to characterize the charisma of the Buddha, deities, and the king or royal persons (e.g., *rachanuphab*) but is not applicable to ordinary persons. *Amnaad* describes fairly well the exercise of legitimate authority as well as power in Western analytic terms (e.g., *than kanmuang* = political authority/power, *than kanborihan* = administrative authority/power). *Khaeng raeng* is apt for describing the physical strength and ability of a person, for instance, an athlete or boxer, but the boxer's strength, art, or virility is not gained in a manner or context devoid of ethical or religious meanings and practices. *Bun* primarily refers to the merit of virtuous actions in previous lives (*mi bun*) and to the acts by which merit is achieved in this life (*tham bun*). *Bun* is an encompassing concept and can be invoked to represent or explain the possession or lack of possession of any or all of the abilities or qualities just enumerated.

[12] We should also include the alleged determinism of planets (astrology), the action of malevolent demons, as also ultimately not working outside or in defiance of the frame of karma.

among the components of a person. Such a logic also constitutes the basis of alchemical practices, which also conflate the ingestion and manipulation of substances with the moral qualities of and moral consequences for the practitioner.

Now let us be clear that these clarifications do not negate a basic ambiguity and tension and, in certain contexts, a contradiction that are embedded in the Buddhist encompassing concepts of dharma and *bun* that evaluate and explain the effectiveness of acts. These stem from the fact that *bun* motivates effective social action, makes possible the enjoyment of social privileges and benefits, and generates the voluntary and intentional propensity to engage in *dana* and charity. But *bun* can also reflect the obverse – that the enjoyment of worldly success is a mark and a measure of a man's *bun* and store of virtue. Thus we have here a two-way indexicality, with the implication that these elevated ethical concepts of social action – by realizing themselves not through minutely coded prescriptions but manifesting themselves through the achieved results of worldly power, success, and well-being – allow for a situation in which power in a practical empirical sense is up for grabs. This in turn leads to its own dialectic of the uncertainties and vicissitudes of actual power wielding, which enables the rise and fall of kings and politicians in terms of the waxing and waning of their funds of merit. In consequence we have rich and gaudy tales of exemplars – of virtuous and potent persons who after their death became *chao phau*, and of wicked and potent persons whose lives were cut short to transform them to malevolent *phi*.

Thus, perhaps, the issue treated by Hanks in terms of a dichotomy between merit and power is more appropriately (in giving a cultural account) formulated in terms of the gap between elevated, perduring, totalizing notions such as dharma and *bun*, and their particular and variable manifestations in individual cases. A case in point, which we have noted earlier, is the Burmese notion of *dhammasattham* (Thai *thammasat*) as eternal law, which should inform but is realized variably in the acts of particular kings, who may range from the saintly benevolent to the cruelly tyrannical, and the length and the glory of whose reigns are a function of their fidelity to the dharma of their kingly office.

We could thus rephrase the Thai perspective on political office and its incumbent in this way: On the one hand, there is a clear recognition of a system of ranked positions and that prima facie the occupants of superior positions are deserving of them (i.e., have legitimacy) by virtue of their merit. Hence inferiors owe them respect, obedience, service. But, on the other hand, incumbents of office are individual persons, and their actions determine their rise and fall, their meteoric advancements, and their inglorious retreats. In short, while a superior's authority and power are more or less automatically accepted as flowing from his occupancy of a position, this legitimation and its accompaniments of respect, loyalty, and service are by definition equally readily withheld or withdrawn when the incumbent's

performance results in both his supersession and replacement, that is, in his loss of merit. Contrapuntally, as we saw in Chapter 16, incumbents of high political office fulfill the traditional expectations of their office by patronizing the sangha, engaging in both public and private meritmaking, and by acting as the supporters and defenders of the *sasana;* their fall from office does not obliterate the obligation of their successors to assume the same sponsorship.

In the light of the foregoing let us now attempt a schematic comparison of the traditional and modern polities, and the transformation from one to the other (see Figure 19.1). We may picture the traditional Thai political system as a three-tiered scheme. An ideal conception of kingship grounded in dharma (righteousness, justice, and morality) is a floating harbor in a churning sea of politics, which throws up a succession of kings – many of them short-lived, a result closely linked to the durability of their charismatic leadership and to the manipulations of a minority of faction-based princes and patrimonial bureaucrats – and relatively autonomous provincial governors and chiefs (*chao muang*); all of this rests on a bed composed of passive peasantry who, though mobilized for occasional public works and warfare under the aspect of serfs (*phrai*) and though objects of extraction of surplus grain and labor power, were otherwise left largely to their own devices. Trade (as, for example, in late Ayutthayan or early Chakkri times) with foreign traders was "administered" (as defined by Polanyi): Exports of local products were a royal monopoly, as were certain crucial imports; foreign communities had their residential quarters in the capital and dealt with the Ministry of Khlang in charge of the gulf provinces. This kind of galactic polity was integrated through collective cosmic rituals in which the king was the focal point and through the building of conspicuous public works whose utility lay at least partially in their being architectural embodiments of the collective aspirations and fantasies of heavenly grandeur. It was thus a theater state providing the masses with an awe-inspiring vision of a cosmic manifestation on earth as well as providing the rulers with an ideal paradigm to follow in their actions.

The right side of Figure 19.1 represents the transformation to the modern radial bureaucratic polity. I must reiterate that this is a view based on the longer-term perspective, emphasizing the homologies, analogies, and formal similarities (thereby ignoring the short-term dynamic inputs of recent international politics, and attempted modernization, which I have already referred to). It inquires as to what degree these features can be regarded as historical *continuities.*

In the overall transformation we see one noteworthy disjunction or disaggregation in that the king has now changed into a constitutional monarch whose personal position as occupant has in one sense become more stabilized because unlike his immediate post-1932 predecessors he is removed to a greater degree from the turmoil of everyday politics. (In the traditional Ayutthayan era no doubt the king was often a passive symbolic

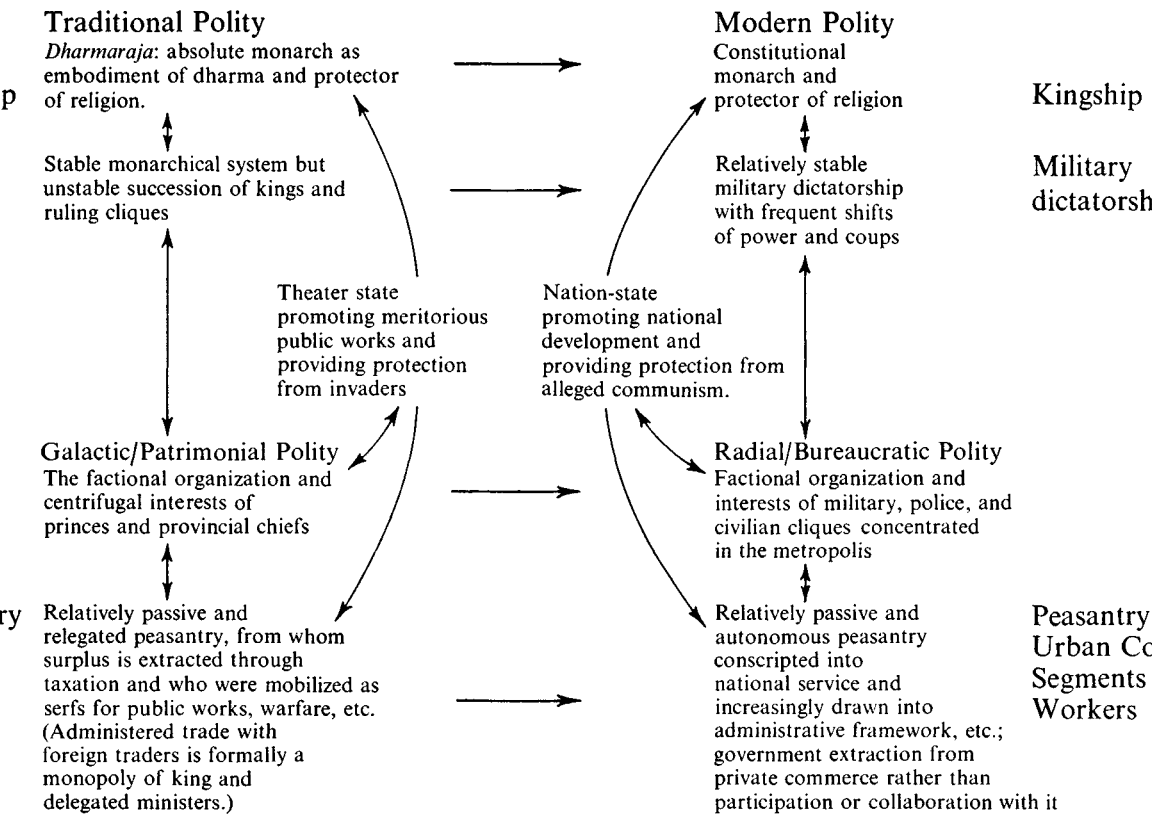

Traditional Polity
Dharmaraja: absolute monarch as embodiment of dharma and protector of religion.
Stable monarchical system but unstable succession of kings and ruling cliques
Theater state promoting meritorious public works and providing protection from invaders
Galactic/Patrimonial Polity
The factional organization and centrifugal interests of princes and provincial chiefs
Relatively passive and relegated peasantry, from whom surplus is extracted through taxation and who were mobilized as serfs for public works, warfare, etc. (Administered trade with foreign traders is formally a monopoly of king and delegated ministers.)
Modern Polity
Constitutional monarch and protector of religion
Relatively stable military dictatorship with frequent shifts of power and coups
Nation-state promoting national development and providing protection from alleged communism.
Radial/Bureaucratic Polity
Factional organization and interests of military, police, and civilian cliques concentrated in the metropolis
Relatively passive and autonomous peasantry conscripted into national service and increasingly drawn into administrative framework, etc.; government extraction from private commerce rather than participation or collaboration with it

Figure 19.1. Transformation from traditional to modern polity in Thailand.

center confined to his palace, while force was wielded by the *uparat*, generals, and ministers. But the fact that kings replaced one another quickly through assassinations and rebellions is a pointer to the fact that they, as centers of partisan ruling circles, were implicated in the political process. The present king's position is a diminished one compared with those Chakkri ancestors in particular who ruled from 1850 to 1925 – they were indeed the major political actors and architects of their kingdom's transformation.) The present king can, therefore, represent more unambiguously at a ritual level and as a potentiality the noblest ideals of political morality and righteousness (dharma) in society. While not governing, he has granted legitimacy to successive ruling cliques by pardoning their coups and sanctioning their rule, even if only by officiating at national ceremonies and occasions.

The real action has been located elsewhere in the form of authoritarian military control, which has, as we have already seen, been experienced since the 30s as frequent shifts of power without changing the structure itself. This was because, once again, politics rested with a narrow stratum of the society – the military and civilian cliques, whose constituency was basically the bureaucracy and the emerging intelligentsia and bourgeoisie. The base of the society is, as in the traditional polity, relatively passive, unengaged and autonomous, though we must take into account the obligation of national military service (a two-year service in the armed forces which is a vital instrument for inculcating in the peasantry patriotism and conformity with national ideals), the increasing incorporation of villagers within an enlarging administrative framework and their increased communication with officials as a result of national development projects and better transport, and so on. Traditional ceremonies and festivals, parades and national days, the building of conspicuous airports and sports stadiums constitute the theatrical vehicles and representations of the nation-state and its political claims.

Although the regimes have looked conspicuously "authoritarian," we must be careful not to exaggerate their repressive capacity and to define the content we give this label. Authoritarianism is indexed by the military-bureaucratic cliques at the top and not by continuing repressive control and surveillance of civil and commercial associations and groups, nor by active, persisting collaborative or participatory contact with them. Such a regime can pass restrictive legislation (e.g., against Chinese commercial interests); it can unleash periodic punitive actions against its internal enemies; it can extract rewards from the associations. But it is incapable of stamping them out, nor can its officials and bureaucracy be closely implicated with them on a day-to-day basis. Such regimes are a far cry from totalitarianism as conventionally understood.

The replacement of the stratum in the traditional polity in which resided the monopoly of political action by the military and civilian bureaucratic

cliques in the modern polity actually goes beyond a formal homology to certain continuities in form and substance.

Structural Continuities

There already exist some perceptive studies of how certain crucial characteristics of traditional Thai governmental and administrative structures persist in the contemporary bureaucracy and manifest themselves in administrative behavior (e.g., Mosel 1965, Siffin 1966, Riggs 1966). Clearly, there is no need for me to repeat those discussions in full, and by way of illustration a summary version of Siffin will serve our purpose admirably.

Siffin asserts – as other scholars have also done – that the traditional (i.e., anterior to mid-nineteenth century) bureaucracy served as the most meaningful framework of those segments of Thai society standing between king and peasant; that its dominant feature was its hierarchical aspect; that the behavioral accompaniments of this overriding political definition of status were expectations of loyalty and diffuse relationships between superior and inferior. Behind this structure formally organized as a chain of command and embraced in a unitary scheme, however, there operated in practice "a loose collection of enclaves," largely self-contained universes whose dependence upon each other was limited.

> Given the hierarchical emphasis of the society, lateral relationships were incidental and almost irrelevant unless they were the personal relations of men in close association. The absence of complex patterns of interdependence among units of administrative organization was a corollary of the grand hierarchical pattern of society (p. 34).

Siffin then attempts to demonstrate that despite the great modernization program, masterminded and implemented from above by King Chulalongkorn and his able princes (like Damrong, Rabi, Nares, Dewawong, etc.), and their attempts to create performance and productivity-oriented bureaucratic organizations, Thailand's contemporary bureaucracy bears strong traces of its ancestor.

Thus, today, Siffin argues, while a Thai's major identity is derived from official status, still his commitment to the organization as such and its official goal is limited. As in traditional times "bureaucratic self-interest" is at work. Productivity is not the central concern, nor achievement norms, but simply *attainment* norms – devoted to fulfilling expectations of conformity, loyalty, and a tolerable minimum level of performance. The pattern of organization is that of "emphatically hierarchical entities, marked by little lateral interdependence among units, and no systematic use of 'staff' units." In short, the dominant value orientations of Thai bureaucracy are: (1) hierarchical status that is inherently valued, (2) personalism, that is, reliance on the value of a limited circle of personal relations (the antithesis of relations in the legal-rational bureaucratic

model), and (3) security orientation, which manifests itself in the attempt to preserve one's membership in the system. The Thai bureaucracy, we are told, is a "system-maintaining" bureaucracy, and not a "goal-attainment" bureaucracy, a far cry from the Weberian model.

Certain writers tend to phrase their account of recent events in Thailand in terms of a *transformation* from a traditional polity to the modern phenomenon of a bureaucratic polity. While not wishing to quarrel with this account – except when an enthusiasm for the transformation hypothesis generates inaccurate statements – I find it necessary also to highlight the continuities and persistence of earlier features that have helped to give shape to the new amalgam.

Continuing with the theme of the persistence of certain traditional features in the contemporary administrative system that Siffin addresses himself to, I would like to highlight certain other features of structural recurrence that relate to the fact that behind the contemporary blueprint of a formal hierarchy of offices, of separate ministries with differentiated and interlocking functions, of a cabinet following a unified policy, and so on, there operate certain processes of politics expressive of the competition for power between individual ministers and their factions.

One process relates to the mechanisms by which bureaucrat-politicians of Thailand exploit their positions to extract financial rewards from the economy. Perhaps Riggs (1966)[12] has the most exhaustive treatment of this latter process, which he asserts as being part and parcel of a bureaucratic polity. Firstly, there is the mechanism of Thai officials milking the Chinese business interests of some of their profits by accepting directorships on business boards in exchange for a certain amount of protection (it is clear that the most important cabinet members and the promoters of coups have the largest number of interlocking directorships). Secondly, there is the interest of Thai ministers and officials in the creation of a number of enterprises, funded from public revenues and operated as public corporations: These include industrial and business corporations, banks, and monopolies,[13] often quite unrelated to the functions of their respective ministries, and are lucrative sources of personal income and patronage.[14] In the modern context I shall label these operations "bureaucratic capitalism." Also to be included in these operations is the establishment of revolving funds by government agencies for use in various commercial and servicing activities (Riggs 1966, p. 445).

[12] Also see Wilson (1962), Siffin (1966), and Skinner (1958).

[13] See Riggs (1966), pp. 304 ff. for a list of these public corporations and organizations. Also see IBRD's *A Public Development Programme for Thailand*, Baltimore, 1959, p. 18.

[14] It is apparent that individual ministers or powerful politicians and army generals have diverse public enterprises attached to their ministries or departments, which are outside the normal bureaucratic framework. Examples are the national lottery, the tobacco monopoly, industrial plants, banks. "These extra-bureaucratic enterprises have often served as the sources of special remuneration for high-ranking officials appointed

Another process is the successful making of inroads into other ministries by the more powerful ones, thereby putting into jeopardy the notion of functional specialization and differentiation of the bureaucracy that is often taken as an index of modernization. There are notable contemporary instances of the expansion of the domains of individual politicians. When Prime Minister Sarit was the undoubted leader between 1958 and his death, his own ministry grew into a larger and larger umbrella for all kinds of new departments whose activities it was claimed would be expedited and aided by virtue of his personal surveillance. A more recent arrogation of another ministry's activities was that concerning the taking away of primary education from the Ministry of Education by the Ministry of Interior (in the charge of General Prapass). The reason for this change was entirely political: With the election of representatives looming in 1968, General Prapass wished to control the primary schoolteachers, whose loyalty is of crucial importance throughout the country especially in the rural areas. In this respect another past parallel – but with quite different political implications – springs to mind. This parallel we have already discussed: In the 1890s, elementary education was taken away from the Education Ministry and entrusted to that brilliant and dynamic Minister of the Interior – Prince Damrong – who with the active coperation of the princely monk Wachirayan – devised a scheme for spreading education in the provinces through monastic schools. Apart from spreading education as such, the objectives were also avowedly to strengthen Buddhism and to ensure the progress of the kingdom through the strengthening of certain traditional institutions – a policy that straddles both reformism and neo-traditionalism.

Thus it is appropriate to indicate that the political processes discussed previously, though no doubt they are characteristic features of the bureaucratic polity as it operates now, were also at work in monarchical times, at least for the immediately preceding period 1782–1873.[15] The operation and supervision of state monopolies allowed for personal appropriation; state regulation of trade, particularly foreign trade, allowed for exactions from foreign communities. As a counterpoise to the king, the power and patronage exercised by heads of departments (*krom*), chiefly members of the nobility, and their extensive networks of control are well attested.[16] Thailand's best example in the nineteenth century is provided by the powerful Bunnak family, whose control of many departments, especially the lucrative one of foreign trade and ports (*khlang*), and whose dense network of marriage alliances (including the provision of queens and concubines to kings) allowed them to seriously constrain the activities of King

to their boards; and some are commonly regarded as sources from which those in control of the government acquire a share of their personal wealth" (Siffin 1966, p. 154).

[15] We could still press further back and see affinities with the processes of bipartitioning, replication of functions in *krom* and leader-follower relations in the preceding Ayutthayan polity (see Chapter 8).

[16] See especially Rabibhadana (1969) and my Chapter 8.

Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn in the earlier part of his reign (Wyatt 1968).

These features persuade one that rather than consider the Western impact on Thailand as having produced only discontinuities and dramatic changes in the Thai polity, it is revealing to view it as also having reinforced and accentuated in certain significant aspects both its overt and latent structural features. Take the contemporary bureaucracy, for example: The hierarchical administrative structure of officials during the early Chakkri monarchical era has now simply been enlarged into an extensive bureaucracy that, in true traditional style, has been by and large loyal and acquiescent to the powers that be. Traditionally, officials existed to implement the ruler's injunctions. And the contemporary attitude is that the bureaucracy is charged with maintaining law and order and with furthering the achievement of stability and continuity of society. Thus in Thailand in the 1960s, for instance, both the political power wielders and its largely conformist bureaucracy were ranged on the same side and tended to think not only of insurgents but also of any elected parliament scrutinizing, criticizing, and delaying their activities as rocking the boat and as inimical to public order.

I particularly have in mind here the coup d'état[17] staged in Thailand in early November 1971. There were several official reasons given by the National Executive Council for this revolution: the increasing Communist threat, especially in Laos, where the enemy had built two roads to the Thai border; the irresponsibility and extremeness of many elected members of the Assembly who held up governmental projects, especially by delaying the passing of the budget; increasing crime, student unrest, and labor strikes; the problem of dealing with a China newly admitted to the United Nations, and the problematic nature of the local Chinese population, whose political affiliations were suspect. I questioned several Thai government officials, teachers, and professionals; most approved, without much demur, of the military action in the interests of suppressing alleged political radicalism and civil crimes and of maintaining order. Those who had reservations did not feel inclined to voice criticisms let alone make public protest. Admittedly, there were tremors among certain student groups that were searching for an intellectual formulation of their disquiet and for some appropriate mode of action, but the time for their organized action inspired by a sharper understanding of issues had not yet come.

But this conformism of the Bangkok-based civilian bureaucracy and intelligentsia and armed forces expressed in terms of giving assent (passively or actively) to the military government's periodic suppression of parliamentary government[18] should not blind us to the fact that oppression

[17] The event is more appropriately labeled an internal "seizure of power" whereby the ruling army elements still further reinforced and strengthened their position.

[18] In 1957 there were body elections in which Phibul and his police general, Phao, were defeated, and the opposition and liberal representatives rallied under Sarit, who,

has taken and still takes its toll in two ways: (1) The question of the morality and the legitimacy of the actions of the military rulers, precisely because of the latter's disjunction from the king, has been, underneath the outward conformity, a nagging one – especially when they are referred to the stock of Buddhist ideas relating to the righteous ruler, to merit as dynamically related to the vicissitudes of world success, and so on, which we have already adumbrated; it is in this context that we should comprehend the efficacy of the ruling elite's highly visible support of the sangha, conspicuous acts of merit making, and solicitation of monks' sacralization of political events (Chapter 15). (2) We should not assume that what Bangkok thinks and feels is automatically what the provinces think and feel, as evidenced by the phenomenon of regionalism.

Wilson (1962) has made the two apt points as regards the political functions the Thai Assembly performs. (1) The first function relates to regionalism, which he calls "the most divisive force in the society" (p. 215). This further comment makes sense in the context of our treatment in Chapter 10 of the pattern of incorporating the outlying provinces and their traditional ruling families followed in the course of implementing provincial administrative reform by Damrong at the turn of this century.

> Regional feeling is strong outside the central area of the country, particularly in the northeast and northern provinces. In not too distant history, these areas have been outside the direct administration of the Bangkok monarchy, living under the hereditary princes or governors. There is in these areas a pattern of opposition to the center on ethnic, economic, linguistic, and cultural, as well as historical grounds. The national assembly provides a possible pathway for provincial notables to attain positions of prestige in the capital and to give vent to their regional grievances. It would appear that most of the outspoken critics of the central government from the regions are in the assembly, or have hopes of being . . . (pp. 215–216).

(2) The second function is broader. Since on the one hand a changing and mobile society like Thailand receives and circulates a variety of ideas and attitudes from traditional and novel sources and since on the other hand the society is "defunct in organizations which might expertly present proposals in the interest of particular groups," the Assembly serves as a floor for airing these attitudes "which provide something more in the nature of a running commentary or editorial on the government and its affairs than a systematic presentation of special interests or group aspirations" (p. 216).

Perhaps it is for northeastern or Isan regionalism that the Assembly has served as a vital platform for the airing of grievances and views, and it is the same regionalism that has evoked fears of separatism and Communist infiltration on the part of the military rulers based in central

however, when he finally assumed power in 1958, dissolved the Assembly and the constitution; it was not until 1968–1969 that a new constitution was promulgated and elections held, but this Assembly too was dissolved and the constitution suspended by the revolutionary action of 1971 referred to previously.

Thailand, fears that they also exploit for propaganda purposes when they have carried out summary executions of inconvenient enemies. We have previously formed the judgment (Chapter 10) that the administrative reforms implemented during King Chulalongkorn's reign in pursuit of the goals of centralization, national integration, and modernization effected a transition to a *radial* polity, suffering from an excessive domination of the capital and an imbalance in the integration of certain regional interests in the national political enterprise. The lack of successful incorporation of the northeast suggested itself as a problem for the future. Keyes (1967) is an informative documentation of the basis and nature of Isan regionalism that continues our story further. This regionalism combines a sense of cultural and linguistic separateness from central Thailand (which dominates the country) with grievances regarding the poverty and neglect suffered by the northeast (which is poorly endowed by nature). It became an issue of political awareness and action among the Isan people precisely as a result of Thailand's process of political centralization, and engagement with France over territorial rights earlier at the turn of the century, and more recently, during World War II.

From Keyes' discussion it emerges as a plausible hypothesis that election to the Assembly was a channel for the continuation of influence by old provincial ruling families displaced by political centralization – the old *chao muang* families – and an avenue for the vocal newly educated and newly risen from humble origins, whether they be teachers, lawyers, or journalists. Moreover, the institution of parliamentary politics, whereby members are elected on a territorial and demographic basis from electorates throughout the country, provides an arena for the mutual political confrontation of diverse interests and through this confrontatiton also keeps them within a national frame. Thus the evaluation is that northeastern regionalism is not secessionist: "Rather than leading Northeasterners to seek a separate political destiny, the uses of Isan regionalism have been directed towards improving the status of the Isan people *within* the national order" (p. 60). Kingship is the common overall symbol, and the central Thai culture of the elite is today the high culture; and, even more importantly, the avidly desired rewards of position, power, and prestige can be gained only through participation in Bangkok-based politics.

But the fact is that despite these political functions and meanings of the Assembly, the various assemblies that came into being (containing combinations of appointed and elected members) were unable to secure a firm foothold or to mobilize a public support sufficiently firm to withstand the generals. For one thing, except for short periods, political parties have not been allowed to exist; and when they were permitted, they made their appearance as multiple fragmented entities, which is an indication of both the decentralized and diffuse organization of the public and the ruling oligarchy's smothering of politico-economic interest groups. Nevertheless, if we focus on the post–World War II years, it seems as if there

were two crucial periods when Assembly-based political discussion and decision making may have been on the verge of presenting themselves as a realistic mode for the conduct of politics in Thailand and of envisaging a political role for Thailand in international politics far different from that advocated by Field Marshal Phibun, Sarit, and Thanom.

The first period is roughly between 1944 and 1947, when Pridi and his former associates in the Free Thai movement, some of who were prominent northeastern MPs (such as Camlong Daoruang, Thawin Udon, Thong-In Phuriphat, and Tiang Sirikhan) formed the *Sahachip* (Cooperative party). The rival group was the Democrat party of Khuang Aphaiwong, Seni, and Khukrit Pramoj. Although the politics of this era was not orderly or productive or honest, – it was lively and memorable because Pridi proposed an international role for Thailand through the agency of the proposed Southeast Asia League in which he hoped Thailand would lead the national movements that were emerging in Indonesia, Burma, and Indochina and were preparing to storm the citadel of colonialism. The Pridi group was also willing in the face of the Great Depression of the thirties to consider introducing new, unconventional, radical, Socialist, and probably unworkable policies, particularly in the economic sphere, in order to increase the prosperity of the country and ensure the economic security of all citizens, especially the poor. I have particularly in mind here Pridi's National Economic Policy (NEP), which he presented to the government in March 1933, and which was rejected, and for which Pridi was accused of being a Communist and subsequently acquitted by a special commission.[19]

The NEP was in one respect very radical, but scarcely anyone has indicated that it also appealed to certain deep-seated traditional orientations and symbols. It was radical because it advocated the nationalization of agricultural and unused land and the management of the economy by a number of diversified cooperative associations that would produce, market, and distribute goods. In one sense this scheme reminds us of the Chinese agricultural cooperatives of the 1950s. Pridi was prepared to pay compensation in bonds for the lands appropriated, and he envisaged the existence of certain kinds of private industrial corporations (e.g., tin mining) and of independent professions (doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc.). The plan would have been unworkable simply because the Thai government did not have the machinery and the manpower to implement the scheme. The scheme was not a reflection of grass-roots aspirations, and Pridi naïvely believed in expert government officials effecting the plan on behalf of the people. The NEP, however, also reflected deeply traditional political assumptions and appealed to equally traditional Buddhist millenarian ideas.

Pridi's Socialist plan rested on what he regarded as a self-evident assump-

[19] Pridi himself declared to a meeting of a committee to consider the plan on March 12, 1933: "Let me say that this plan is not Communistic! It is a combination of capitalism and socialism . . ." (Landon 1939, p. 304).

tion that all or most Thais would like to be government employees – an assumption that echoes patrimonial and feudal values of titles, benefices, secure privileges, and corvée obligations. Thus at the top of every page of the policy statement appeared the slogan and question: "Why do officials with salaries and pensions oppose the granting of salaries and pensions to the people?" And in Part III of the policy dealing with social insurance appeared this explanation for the proposed social security act:

> The plan to issue monthly wages to all of the people is peculiarly well adapted to the special character of the Siamese people. It is well known that all Siamese want to work for the government and that they like to receive regular salary. And yet some government officials travel around campaigning against this programme because they are unwilling to have all the people work for the government . . . (Landon 1939, p. 265).

The NEP concluded with the magnificent promise that it would initiate the Buddhist utopia of *siriaraya* and the era of plenty when the *kalpavrksha* trees of life (Thai *ton kanlaphaphruksa*) would bloom and bear fruit as in the time of the next saviour Buddha, Mettaya.

> When the administration of the economic system by the government shall have brought about the final consummation of the aims set forth by the People's Party in their six-point platform, that state of prosperity and felicity which is the laudable desire of every heart and which, in classical language is called *siriaraya* will have dawned. Shall we, who have opened the door of opportunity to the people, now hum and haw and fumble and hesitate to lead them on to the place where they can gather the fruits of the tree of life?
>
> There at least they will be able to feast on the fruits of happiness and prosperity in fulfillment of the Buddhist prophecy to be found to the religion of Araya Mettaya. According to this prophecy every act of devotion on the part of the faithful followers of religion brings that golden age a little nearer. . . . Religious ceremonies properly observed and in fact all acts of honesty and integrity likewise bring nearer the dawn of that era. In this plan we have a system by which we can press forward to this golden age. And yet there are some people who hesitate, who draw back so violently that one would suppose they contemplate a return to the age of unenlightenment of 2,475 years ago when Buddha had not yet come (pp. 292–293).

The end of the Pridi era of Assembly politics came in 1948 with Phibun's coup d'état, which was preceded in 1944 by the infamous "kilo 11" shooting accident at which some Free Thai politicians (including important northeastern leaders) were assassinated in reprisal for the failed countercoup led by Pridi forces. The second brief flowering – or perhaps fireworks display – of Assembly politics was in 1957–1958. Elections were twice held (in February and December 1957) as a result of which the pro-Phibun faction in the Assembly was outnumbered and a hopeful era of clean politics was thought to be struggling to be born. The parties in power during this brief period came to be characterized as leftist (and once again included prominent northeasterners), and their stance on international poli-

tics as well as on internal economic development is worth noting. I can do no better than quote Keyes:

> The leftist parties were opposed to Thailand's membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Asian People's Anti-Communist League, to the receiving of American aid which they alleged had "strings" attached, and to a pro-Western foreign policy. Officials in the government close to General Sarit viewed the pressures, exerted primarily by northeastern representatives, for "socialistic" programs to improve the economic portion of the Northeast, for greater toleration of leftist political action within the country, and for a neutral foreign policy with grave apprehension . . . (1966, p. 49).

Sarit's inauguration of a new period of military rule in late 1958 was the beginning of another authoritarian era advocating different slogans and policies.

In this digression I have made two points. The first concerned the Assembly as a platform for the expression of dissident views from the provinces and as an arena for engaging regional interests and groups that in the last resort consider themselves today as belonging to the same polity under one common king. The second indicated the direction of Thai politics during two brief periods when the Assembly was allowed to function relatively freely. I made them in the course of inquiring whether there were open-ended moments when Thailand might have taken a different path in regard to the structure and policies of its government. Though they were short-lived moments, they exist as precedents, and precedents can of course be activated in the future.

However, if one reviews the pattern of events from the end of World War II to about 1971–1972, it would seem that the weight of certain internal propensities and developments within the country, and external influences bearing upon it, produced a state of affairs in a relatively unequivocal manner. The 1932 revolution merely changed the later Chakkri oligarchical government of the monarchy and princes for that of commoners dominating the army and the civil bureaucracy; the long-term centralization and modernization activities continued to strengthen the powers of the government. The civil servants and bureaucratic personnel generally supported a law-and-order-proclaiming government against the volatile, dissenting, and critical voice of elected politicians who they feared might endanger the regularity of their bureaucratic activities. External events such as the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the consequent strengthening of the Thai armed forces and military interests put an undisputed military regime in business, a regime that enjoyed the monopoly of force against the civilian elements. Finally, even though there have been expressions of Isan regionalism, it is important to point out that Isan peasants and villagers have scarcely so far directly contributed to the politics of their representatives in Bangkok; moreover, the provincial elite, both old and new, have over time been necessarily attracted to the primate city of Bangkok, where they must necessarily educate their children and where are found

the most important prizes, which they must pursue, if they wish to do so, according to the rules of the game and the idiom of the dominant culture of the Bangkok-based ruling cliques and elite members. It is important to appreciate that although many of the members of the armed forces and the civil bureaucracies had their origins in the provinces, they have successfully mastered, over and above their own regional variants, the dominant central Thai culture.

Thus in the light of the foregoing I would characterize the present political system (1971–1972) as follows: Capped by a revered (though politically clipped) monarchy, legitimated by a ritualistically robust Buddhism, and controlled by army and police generals whose ground of support is the civil and military bureaucracies, it commands by and large the acquiescence of the large mass of citizens who recognize themselves as Thai. The 3 million or so local Chinese cannot be assumed as automatically supporting the military government, though they have made their accommodation to it.[20] The peasantry are, of course, devoted to Buddhism and to kingship; although their interaction with Thai bureaucracy is remote, there is as yet, despite agrarian grievances in certain regions, by and large no direct resistance to the government, except among certain elements in the border regions. The degree of alienation of the border regions is difficult to assess: The *active* dissidents are one of three groups: peasants victimized by the police and the bureaucracy, fugitives from justice, and a small number of politically committed Communist insurgents. While the support of the rural peasantry has been largely passive, that of the relatively large bureaucracy manned by educated Thais has been more direct and politically the more important for purposes of power maintenance.

It is opportune at this point to review the symbols of legitimacy that positively inhere in the present political system and that it also consciously employs and manipulates. If we posed the question in traditional terms, we would ask: What is the form of righteousness (dharma) that the present polity can convincingly claim? I am here concerned with the arrangement of symbols produced from one "homogenizing" view that was recently promoted by the dominant ruling elements. This does not preclude disparities and tensions coming to the surface in the future and stemming from differently placed political groups.

Many Thai people value the meaning embedded in the name "Thai," which is usually rendered as "free people." Educated Thai when expressing pride in their freedom invoke the magnificent inscription of 1292 of their illustrious King Ramkhamheng of Sukhodaya. Two assertions in this inscription have become bywords. "In the water there is fish, in the fields there is rice" is still true of this country that enjoys the fertility of nature and freedom from hunger and overpopulation and whose people have freely expanded and exploited the land for a long time. But the other

[20] See Skinner (1958) for the pattern of relations between the Thai government and the Chinese. Also see Coughlin (1960).

assertion about the nature of the king's rule – "There is a bell suspended in the embrasure of the palace doorway: if an inhabitant of the kingdom has any grievance or any matter that is gnawing at his entrails and tormenting his spirit and he wants to reveal it to the king, it is not difficult; he has only to strike the bell hanging there" – this assertion is problematic if taken too literally as the custom initiated by King Ramkhamheng because it is one of the expressions of the ideal ruler, which occurs also in the chronicles of other Buddhist polities (e.g., the *Mahavamsa* of the Sinhalese) and can be traced back to even earlier Indian sources.

It is patently clear that the modern Thai people's tradition of being free relates not so much to their concern with the political institutions that Western countries associate with free democracy but with their successful maintenance of their political freedom as a nation and polity from the attacks of *external* agents, the Burmese and Khmer in the past, the Western colonial powers more recently, and most recently, the Communist menace thought to threaten king, religion, and nation. I have already referred to the seeds of an activistic concept of nationhood sowed by Kang Wachirawut and how they took root in the Phibul era and grew during the Sarit regime. An inherently hierarchical-minded society (hierarchy being reflected at many levels: as a ranked pantheon of leaders and their followers wielding differential power in the political realm, which indeed gives the society its overall shape; as grading of occupational status within one's own department or workplace; and, finally, as superordination-subordination of generational segments and persons of relative age in the sphere of kinship and social relations), it collectively responds to slogans such as "the maintenance of law and order against the specter of external threat or internal danger." The promotion of the theme of national development, the denunciation of the divisiveness caused by representative institutions, the felt imperative need to domesticate minorities and tribal groups – these policies were in line with these orientations and evoked responsive reaction among many citizens. Concordant with the nation concept were also the feeling of pride in possessing military muscle and the visible enjoyment of parades and displays. Every day, in elegant uniforms and holding briefcases, the cadets of the elite military academy in Bangkok march to school to the sound of flutes; every morning the national flag is raised in schools before the assembled children, also clothed in uniforms. These are real expressions of a collective willingness to be regimented because of the awareness of a collective existence as a polity.

The Modern Concept of Thai Kingship

We have also adverted at various places to another domain of deeply entrenched symbols concerning the king and the Buddhist *sasana* that actively give body to and/or confer legitimacy on the present polity. Once again, we must refer to Sarit as either reviving or intensifying the use of certain roy-

alist symbols, about which the earlier promoters of the 1932 revolution were ambivalent.

The Sarit regime's rehabilitation of the monarchy, not only ceremonially but also as a rallying point of national virtue and integrity, is important, precisely because the king, largely shorn of power, could now represent the dharma of politics ideally and – within limits – exhort the rulers and the ruled to enlightened action. Sarit made it possible for the king and queen to go on trips abroad in the belief that they would help improve the image of the country abroad and at home. Royal ceremonies such as *kathin* presentations were upgraded, and first ploughing (*raekna*) was revived. The conferring of civil titles (such as *phya, luang, Phra,* etc.) by the king, abolished by Phibul, was revived. An expansion of this role is the king's regularly presenting titles to monks and degree certificates to university graduates and advanced monk-scholars. The list can be expanded, but let me refer lastly to the vital cult of the Emerald Buddha of which the king himself is still the major officiant. The Emerald Buddha, like the Tooth Relic in the past indigenous kingdoms of Sri Lanka, represents for Thailand not only part of the regalia of kingship but, more importantly, national sovereignty itself conjoined with the protection and practice of Buddhism. The king bathes and changes the clothes of this statue three times a year with the change of seasons – he officiates with court brahmans and court officials in attendance. The temple of the Emerald Buddha, regularly attended by thousands of pious worshipers, is situated within the grand palace compound, thereby indissolubly associating it with the king. This excerpt from my field notes gives a fleeting glimpse of what the person of the king means to Thai of all classes today:

On *khaw-phansa* (when monks enter Lent), a period that coincides with the beginning of the rainy season, I was present at Wat Phra Keo (the temple of the Emerald Buddha) to witness proceedings. This year (1971) *khaw-phansa* and the changing of clothes fell on the same day. There were several hundred people present – of all ages, of all classes, and all shades, including *farang* tourists. I was impressed by the fact that I could detect in the crowd both affluent and sophisticated urbanites and ordinary city laborers and rural folk.

The public was not allowed entry into the temple, but I was told that the king was inside decking the statue in its wet-season clothes. A bystander told me: "The wet-season clothes are the *monk's* robe; in the hot season the statue is clothed in sparse (i.e., cool) but rich clothes; and in the cool season, it is clothed in full, regal costume." (I wondered whether this contrast and oscillation of monk's robe and regal costume was not an apt representation of the theme that the Buddha and the *cakkavatti* are complementary; also whether at another level the king is an appropriate priest of the cult because he is traditionally believed to be a future if not an actual *bodhisattva.*)

I saw brahman priests moving about wearing traditional-style white clothes and long hair knotted at the back, and impeccably groomed and uniformed royal officials. The ceremony was punctuated at various times by the dramatic beat of drums and the wailing of flutes.

It started to rain fairly heavily, but the crowd did not seek shelter but sat down or stood in rows, four to five deep, because the king was about to emerge. The king emerged at the left door, a large parasol held above his head, with officials surrounding him, and he sprinkled lustral water on the people, all now on their knees, hands joined in respectful worship and receiving the auspicious water of life with an intensity and eagerness that has to be seen to be believed.

In the Sarit regime's renewal and intensified use of the institution of kingship both to legitimate and to stimulate national development, we probably witnessed the expansion of meaning that attaches to a traditional symbol, which is called upon to serve new purposes in addition to some of the old.

A highlight of the new development is that the concept of the sovereign people and nation is not only self-consciously differentiated but also declared superior to kingship itself. Indeed, kingship is now declared to be the handmaid of the nation, albeit its foremost one and therefore its most sacred and treasured one. Consider, for example, the first three articles of the interim constitution of 1959, that was proclaimed soon after Sarit seized power:

Article 1. The sovereign power emanates from the Thai people.
Article 2. Thailand is a kingdom, one and indivisible, with the king as head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces of the kingdom.
Article 3. The person of the king is sacred and inviolable.

The transformed position of the king within the polity (as compared, say, with the time of Mongkut and Chulalongkorn) is aptly illustrated by the fact that the old ceremony of "taking the water of allegiance," at which the king's officers took a loyalty oath to the king, has recently been transformed, so that now the king, followed by his officials, takes the first oath of fidelity and loyalty to the nation.[21] Correspondingly, the celebration of the Thai National Day has been transferred from the day on which the 1932 revolution took place (June 7) to coincide with the king's birthday (December 5). King and nation are thus reconciled and coalesced.

The Sangha and the Polity

The second arm that was relied upon for political purposes by the Sarit regime (and its successors) is the sangha and its bhikkhus. We thus return to the main subject matter of this book.

Figure 19.2 is constructed so as to place the three-tiered structure of the modern polity (the right side of Figure 19.1) in relation to the formal hierarchical structure of the sangha, as discussed in earlier chapters and

[21] It appears that the king took the initiative in reviewing the ceremony and changing it. Those invited to drink with His Majesty, in 1969, for example, were the members of the Knighthood of the Rama Order of Chivalry, and those invited to be present were the families of the knights as well as the prime minister, privy councillors, and so on.

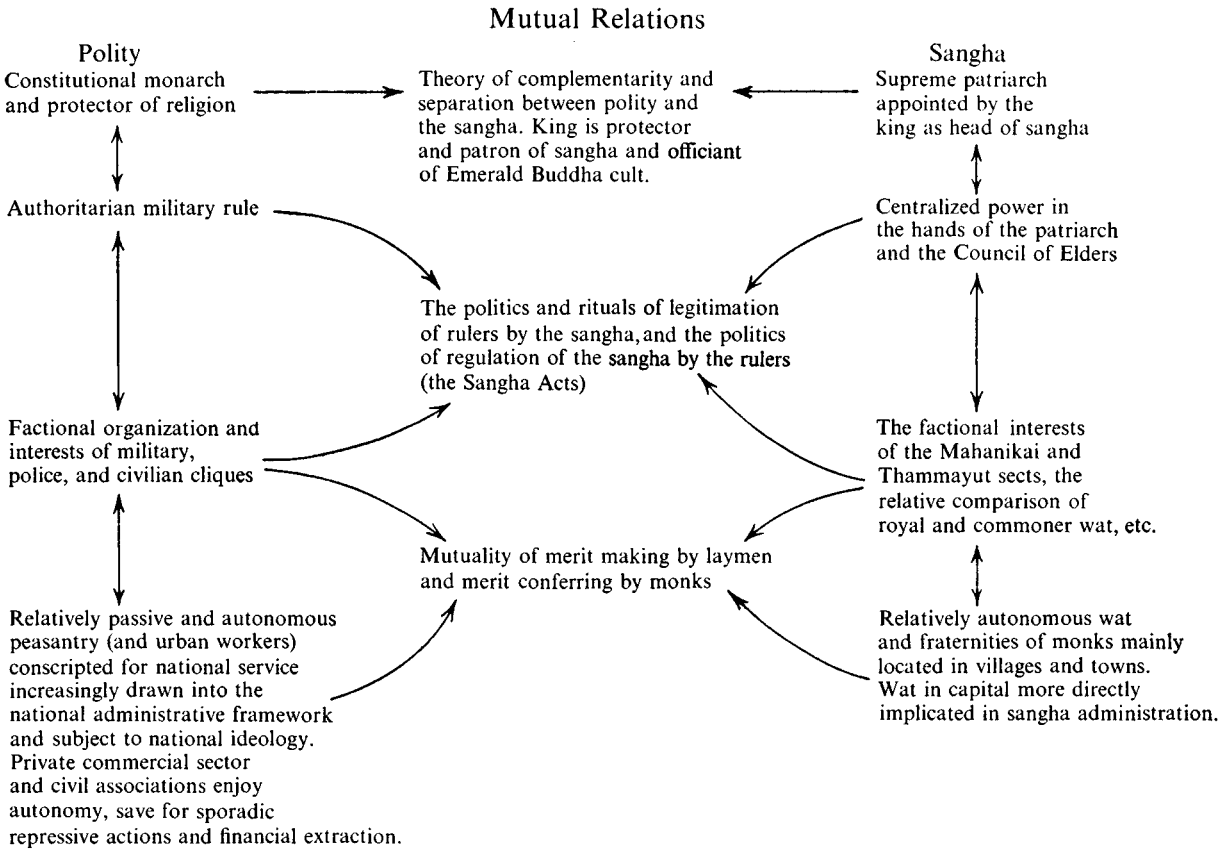

Mutual Relations
Polity
Constitutional monarch and protector of religion
Theory of complementarity and separation between polity and the sangha. King is protector and patron of sangha and officiant of Emerald Buddha cult.
Sangha
Supreme patriarch appointed by the king as head of sangha
Authoritarian military rule
Centralized power in the hands of the patriarch and the Council of Elders
The politics and rituals of legitimation of rulers by the sangha, and the politics of regulation of the sangha by the rulers (the Sangha Acts)
Factional organization and interests of military, police, and civilian cliques
The factional interests of the Mahanikai and Thammayut sects, the relative comparison of royal and commoner wat, etc.
Mutuality of merit making by laymen and merit conferring by monks
Relatively passive and autonomous peasantry (and urban workers) conscripted for national service increasingly drawn into the national administrative framework and subject to national ideology. Private commercial sector and civil associations enjoy autonomy, save for sporadic repressive actions and financial extraction.
Relatively autonomous wat and fraternities of monks mainly located in villages and towns. Wat in capital more directly implicated in sangha administration.

Figure 19.2. Parallelism between the polity and the sangha hierarchies.

here translated into terms that are homologous with the tripartite structure of the polity. The figure requires little explication. At the highest levels there is the old classical conception that links the king with the sangha as its protector, patron, and purifier. The sangha in turn, headed by its patriarch, is the protector and keeper of the Buddha's dhamma and hence is the third refuge of the people.

At the middle level of the polity the structure of the military dictatorship with its concentration (despite frequent shifts) of power corresponds to the centralization of the sangha and the concentration of power in the hands of the patriarch and the Council of Elders (*Mahatherasamakhom*). This and the factional interests of military and civilian cliques is parallelled in the sangha first by the sectarian interests of the Mahanikai and Thammayut chapters and then by the invidious comparison between royal and commoner wat and the covert and muted competition between them (and their abbots and their assistants) – for prestige, titles, and in temple building, and so on. All these features enter into the involvement with the sangha and its regulation by the political authority – which we have already examined in the three Sangha Acts – and the rituals and politics of legitimation by which the military leaders and rulers request the cooperation of the sangha in blessing national projects, national holiday festivities, their own public appearances, and private household ceremonies. The rulers *are* Buddhists and, therefore, as we saw earlier, their commitment to acts of merit making toward the sangha as ends in themselves cannot be separated from their political use or exploitation of them as national symbols.

Finally, at the polity's base are placed the relatively autonomous settlements and households of the peasantry (and urban workers) that are matched by the innumerable relatively autonomous wat and monastic fraternities that constitute the basic components of the sangha. The dynamic link between them is by now all too familiar: a mutuality of merit making (which includes material support of monks) by the laity and of merit conferring (through recitations and rituals) by the monks. We do not of course mean to exclude from this level of consideration the social-prestige-acquiring dimensions of lay piety or the ecclesiastical-title-acquiring objectives of active abbots or the educational aspirations of the earnest young student-monks, whose eyes are focused on the metropolis.

But this account of the parallelism between the polity and the sangha would be seriously out of focus – indeed a serious distortion – if we did not proceed to consider as a dialectic the scheme of *inverted priorities of action* between the lay actors whose métier is the political domain and the ordained *bhikkhus* whose main domain is *sasana* (religion).

The lay political domain of Thai society, if I may build on and abstract from earlier discussion in this chapter, is structured in terms of three values, the first encompassing the second, and the second the third:

1. The overarching principle of the Thai polity today (as in the past) is

its ranked aspect. The traditional model of the Chakkri polity (of, say, the period 1782–1850) had the absolute monarch at the top. In theory he ruled with the help of a patrimonial-feudal bureaucracy, composed of princes and nobles (*nai*) who administered the central departments (*krom*), and provincial governors (*chao muang*); they controlled the labor and surplus produce of the populace – who were either serfs of the king (*phrai luang*) or of the nobles (*phrai som*) – and supervised the trade monopolies and together with the monarch enjoyed the fruits thereof. The contemporary model replaces this structure with a constitutional monarch, with power residing in an authoritarian military dictatorship generated by the military-civilian bureaucracy supporting itself through bureaucratic capitalism, this edifice resting on a relatively passive agricultural populace. The view of the Thai polity as a universe of ranked positions with penumbras of supporters is inescapable and is perhaps the most pervasive experience of the lay actor in the system today. He is aware of the descending scale of ranking among the princes (e.g., *chaofa, phra ong chao, mon chao*) and of the nonprincely royal descendants (*mom rajawong* and, finally, *mon luang*) whose descendants in turn join the ranks of the commoners. He is orientated to the ranking of nonroyal official titles – *chao phraya, phraya, phra, luang, khun,* etc. He is acutely sensitive to the pervasive ranking of the armed forces from generals to privates and of civil servants from special rank to the n^{th} grade. Finally, in the kinship-social domain, the ranking by generations and relative age, which finds its quintessential expression in village life, is a matter of everyday experience.

2. Within this world view of relative merit and power (a gradation that is by the way reflected in Buddhist cosmology and cosmogony), the layman's next perceived range of social relations is located in the more limited domain of workplace and everyday social contact – for instance, a government department or institution that although consisting of ranked positions, emphasizes *interpersonal* relations of patron-client – and of support-relations among ranked colleagues. In more sharpened circumstances these relations crystallize into coteries, cliques, factions, and so on. (The appropriate but more tenuous parallels to these can be located in village society as well.)

3. Finally, within this more restricted social domain, we locate the actor's own *personalized* realm of orientations and priorities. While the majority of Thai value security, *sanuk* (a state of enjoyment), *choei* (a "cool" unruffled etiquette-controlled behavior), the exceptional socially mobile individuals express a forcefulness and a capacity for manipulative mobilization, which make them patrons and leaders and, at the very top, the successful promoters of military coups. Special institutions, such as the military academies, are the breeding grounds of such leaders.

Now it is my thesis that there is a level at which the *bhikkhu*'s view of his society and his place in it does not so much parallel the layman's as

invert it: A monk's primary view of the sangha (especially if he lives outside the capital) is that it is primarily a *collection* of sects and an aggregation of dispersed fraternities and monastic communities (wat) that enjoy a basic autonomy and equality. No doubt this view of the sangha as a collection of monastic residential communities or fraternities is cognitively modified by the fact that the political relations with the state and regulation by it produce an ecclesiastical administrative hierarchy and that the ranking of wat vis-à-vis one another produces relative comparison and factional interests. But these features that we alluded to in Figure 19.2 do not so much signify the primacy of ranking as hierarchy exercising a *secondary* stress on the basic grid of a loose collection of equal units. In other words, the ecclesiastical structure did not historically develop from an internal need of the sangha in the pursuit of its religious objective but is derived from its coupling with the political authority and their mutual relations of dependence. The mutuality as well as dialectical tensions in the relations between sangha and polity are necessarily reflected in the monk's equivocal orientation to a state-supported ecclesiastical hierarchy, which becomes more elaborate the closer the ties are with the polity. It is in this sense that the sangha hierarchy is a derived rather than a primary fact of the monk's existence and vocation.

It is within this prior world view of the sangha as essentially a collection of fraternities that we must situate the monk's own view of his vocation, whether temporary or enduring, as being practiced in the form of nonrestrictive relations with fellow monks living in wat, which are physically, geographically, and architecturally demarcated and separated from lay habitation. Now here again there is no denying that internal ranking exists within Thai wat. Our problem is to evaluate its weight in the subjective experience and social fields of the monks themselves. While a layman is possessed of a world view of relative rank and power and obligation, the impingement of those factors on a monk's life in a wat are far less weighty and constraining. In the multitude of small wat located in Thai villages today, internal ranking is minimal – extending from abbot to monks (ordered according to number of *phansa* they have served) to novices – all held together by a discipline that is not oppressive, once certain basic rules are adhered to. In the large urban wat the internal differentiation and ranking is often complex: There are the abbot and a vice abbot plus the abbot's deputies and personal assistants, often bearing titles; there may be committees that take care of the monastic finances, the monastic school, the repair and maintenance of buildings, and so on; then there is the residential organization into *khana*, with a superior monk appointed as the head (*chaokhana*); there is the overall classification into regular monks ranked by length of service, temporary monks ordained for one Lent only, novices and, finally, the *sidwat* or *dekwat* (temple boys attending lay schools). I do not propose to go into the details here of internal ranking

and organization in large urban wat, whether royal or commoner (there are differences between them with regard to administrative requirements, the commoner wat being required to have *kammakan wat*, or wat committees, but not the royal wat), but it can be said that in the network of monastic life what stands out most markedly – and this is amply attested by the career histories reported in earlier chapters – is the supportive dyadic disciple relationship with an *achan* (teacher) – whether he is an abbot (*luang phau*), ordainer (*upacha*), head of a residential group (*chaokhana*), teacher (*khru*), or simply a more elderly brother monk (*liang phi*). This supportive relationship is asymmetrical – cast in the categorical idiom of teacher-pupil, father-son, or elder brother-younger brother as the case may be – but its crucial feature is that it is a solidary dyadic paired relation or a collection of dyadic pairs focused on a patron within a larger monastery structure that is formally *unlike* the lay urban bureaucratic world of hierarchically ordered departments or institutions. Since the patron-client and other asymmetrical relations that figure in the lay urban corporate structures occur in ordered hierarchical contexts that are arenas for the acquisition of power, prestige, and material benefits, they necessarily generate cliques and factions that act as political organs. But by contrast, even in large monasteries, where residential groupings and disciple relationships exist, they do not usually or frequently generate factions (although they do materialize and are not unknown), because there is little power residing within a wat to be captured and little opportunity for personal appropriation of the financial and material assets of the monasteries. In this respect of course, as we have indicated earlier, Thai monasteries provide a contrast to Sinhalese monasteries in which caste considerations and/or property interests attached to the position of incumbent of the temple encourage factional disputes around the institution of pupillary succession to the office of incumbent.

Finally, in this environment of monastic life, wherein monks may temporarily or enduringly attach themselves to particular wat, is pursued the calling of the individual monk (or novice), which he may practice in one of many possible styles. It is of signal importance to appreciate the *latitude* and *mobility* allowed individual monks. First let us consider the latitude. A monk is permitted to disrobe freely whenever he wishes to return to lay life. But more noteworthy, a monk who intends to spend a number of years in the sangha may choose a vocation from a number of possibilities: He may devote his time to studies, receiving *parian* degrees and titles and ascending the ecclesiastical ladder; or he may choose to concern himself seriously in monastic education, including the running of universities; he may, however, devote himself to the practice and teaching of meditation, either as a recluse in a forest hermitage or as a monk in urban monasteries having as his pupils both other monks (and novices) and laymen; or, again, depending on his interest and flair, he may master the art of astrology and

cater primarily to laymen, giving counsel to politicians, and earning prestige, renown, popularity, and material benefits thereby; or he may become an expert in the performance of certain auspicious and prosperity-conferring rituals, again cultivating a lay clientele; or, finally, he may be active in none of these and yet be an acceptable (though undistinguished monk).

Next let us consider the mobility aspect. We note that the mobility phrased in the canonical texts as "from home into homelessness" is now transformed into a different kind of movement along the monastic network. Earlier chapters provided detailed evidence of the free and easy mobility of novices and monks from monastery to monastery, along a network linking village, town, and finally the metropolis. We saw how monks and novices freely took advantage of *achan-luksit* relations in making upward moves, these relationships not necessarily being ideologically conceived as enduring and obligatory. The monks and novices whose career pathways we traced earlier were primarily of village origins, interested in the pursuit of education, and imbued with activistic orientations. If they choose to remain within the sangha, it is most likely they who will win most of the titles and become the dignitaries in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which, in imitation of the civil administration, has an elaborate ranking of offices culminating with the patriarch. Thus if we now attempt to place this administrative hierarchy and its actual effectiveness in the total sangha context, we shall have to venture the judgment that it is a derivative of two features: (1) *internally*, a product of a certain number of energetic and talented monks motivated to make, use, and maintain the pathways that we have called the monastic networks (both informal and formal) and (2) *externally*, a product of the political system's interest in building an ecclesiastical hierarchy through which it can more effectively ensure certain standards of conduct and regulate the sangha. We have argued earlier that this political regulation by the state has progressively increased from the establishment of the Chakkri dynasty in 1782 to this day and is signposted by the Sangha Acts of 1902, 1941, and 1963.

It is the convergence of these features at this point of time that accounts in large part for the activistic orientations of the monks based in the capital – expressed in their attempt to recover their previous educational roles, in their participation in national development in the form of missionary activity (*thammathud*), and in their formulation of doctrinal interpretations that are partly reformist transformations based on canonical traditions and partly the emphasis of possibilities inhering in canonical and historical Buddhism and tailored to the circumstances of the day. We may also take note of the fact that Thailand's position in regard to international politics has made its military government take a fierce stand against communism, which is viewed as being a danger to Buddhism and the sangha. The modern activistic monk's desire to participate in national development is therefore in part a response to this imagined danger, a response that brings the sangha closer to the government.

Buddhism and Modernization

We are now in a position to add a few words as to how contemporary Thai Buddhism relates to modernization and to examine the proposition that Buddhism in Thailand serves as the "religion of the bourgeoisie" as effectively as it does as "the religion of the rural masses."[22]

A visitor to Bangkok (or any provincial town) very quickly sees – because of its conspicuousness and frequency of occurrence – how much religious and ritual activity goes on. If he arrives before the onset of the rains – and before the beginning of Lent in July – he will see numerous jolly processions composed of brightly decked youth dancing to music and leading reticent and solemn white-robed ordinands, holding lotuses, to their ordinations as monks; some three months later he will see the even more boisterous, elaborate, and noisy *kathin* processions, sometimes several buses long. Aside from the state-sponsored Buddhist national holidays and annual festivities like *Wisakha Bucha*, and *Thed Mahachad* (readings from the *Vessandaun Chadok*), there are staged at wat innumerable rituals, such as elaborate mortuary rites and the weekly *wan phra* worship, and at homes numerous merit-making ceremonies of one kind or another. All these occasions entail lavish gift giving to the monks, especially by the middle "classes." The visitor will also see the innumerable shrines – especially the Phra Phrom (Brahma) shrine on the grounds of Bangkok's well-known Erawan Hotel, where continuously through the day, and rising to a peak at night, crowds (particularly women) of all classes throng to place jasmine flowers and to light candles while asking for favors or in recognition of wishes fulfilled; and, similarly, near the grand palace, the asking of favors and the pious acknowledging of their fulfillment go on at the *Lak Muang* (the phallic pillar of the city) and within the palace itself, at the temple of the Emerald Buddha; not far away, devout worshipers divine their fortunes in front of the enormous gold-paper daubed reclining Buddha at Wat Chettuphon. And if the visitor is driven along the crowded streets of this older part of the city, which is studded with spired temples decorated with pieces of colored china, he will see the numerous shops stocked with religious articles – monk's robes, temple furniture, statues, religious books, incense and candles, and so on – which the pious purchase to give their favorite monks. If the visitor traverses the four or five streets that converge on Wat Suthat (situated near the great swing, where in earlier days a grand ceremony of the descent of Shiva to the earth was enacted), he will see an unusual concentration of these shops, usually run by Chinese, stocked with the material needs of monks and wat.

A systematic investigation of certain features of the urbanites' religious

[22] There are no adequate ethnographic studies of the Thai urban working "class," but whatever evidence we have suggests that workers' religious orientations are not markedly different from those of villagers. Jane Bunnag (1973) has some information on the orientations of this category.

conduct in the city leads to the inescapable conclusion that Buddhism is a flourishing religio-social activity, vitally alive and well in Bangkok. It certainly appears to be a religion of optimism and anticipatory expectation rather than pessimism and gloomy expiation. Seen in this context, therefore, it can most appropriately be labeled a religion of the bourgeoisie because as economic expansion and modernization are experienced – and they are experienced more acutely in Bangkok than elsewhere in the country – living standards and aspirations will rise *pari passu*, and with this again the tremendous urge to possess, use, and enjoy the material goods and luxuries we associate with affluence. The more the Thai participate in this expansionary cycle of wished-for betterment of this-worldly life, the more meaningful it is for them as Buddhists to engage in greater and greater gift giving to monks and to temples, and thereby accumulate merit, which they believe will feed back directly into and affect the fortunes of their everyday lives. It seems to me that thousands of Thai Buddhists seek favors before Buddha statues or before gods, and in a various assortment of shrines, not so much because they are materially deprived or their futures are bleak but because they are appreciative of plenty and desire more than what they have now.

Thus increased ritual activity is compatible with rising expectations. Hand in hand with this goes the compulsive consultation of astrologers (many of whom are monks) by many Thai, particularly the prosperous and sophisticated urbanites and the power-wielding politicians and generals. For if power and merit and bliss and prosperity are desirable and attainable, why not seek them through the advice of disinterested but spiritually endowed and wise monks? These orientations also fit the theory of rebirth, for rebirth can and does promise a more optimistic future, a better condition, to him who acts charitably and gives generously in this life. It is this concern that perhaps partly at least explains the Thai preoccupation with mortuary rites as their most important and elaborate rite of passage, for at the point soon after death, everything is done to ensure a safe passage to a more prosperous next life. And the layman's concern with the aftermath of death interlocks with the monk's performance of the rites of death, because the monk also consciously reflects upon the fact that death symbolizes in a vivid manner the principle of impermanence of life. Many of Bangkok's famous and prosperous wat owe their fame and fortunes to the fact that they are popular and prestigious places for the conduct of cremation rites for the Thai (and mortuary rites for the Chinese). It is no exaggeration to say that monks are the funerary priests of the people. The layman, oriented to this-worldly prosperity and happiness, wants to tap from the monk who embodies spiritual achievement, whatever benefits he can; the monk, insofar as he rejects or denies the layman's mundane goals for himself, is able to pass on the "fruits of his action" to the layman.

This reciprocity, which is classical, achieves concreteness in a sociologi-

cal exchange that we see as being transacted in Thailand. Urban migration is a sizable event in modern Thailand. From the villages migrate many who join the bottom range of urban society as laborers, servants, taxi drivers, and pedicab drivers (now extinct in the capital). But from the same ranks of the farmers and rural poor another category of young men migrate to the metropolis as novices and monks, and in this vocation they gain respect, prestige, a sense of achievement that their lay status denied them, and even a degree of physical comfort (despite the rigors of a monk's life) to which they were previously unaccustomed. (I refer here to the comfortable physical accommodation provided by many urban wat.) These monks by virtue of their rural background are, in the Thai context at least, disposed to be conservative (and even to a degree apolitical). This results in their acting in this context as direct or indirect legitimizers of the status quo. Furthermore, as we have seen, Buddhism and modernization (or, if you will, economic development) are harnessed together today. While the rural poor provide the monks, the more affluent segments of the urban population, in turn, while not losing their sons to religion (in that few regular or permanent monks come from their ranks), divert a part of their wealth and earnings toward the material support of these monks.

Since the northeast has figured importantly in this study, it is fitting to say a few words on how this region contributes to the population and to the events occurring in the primate city of Bangkok. The manner in which the relations between the sangha and the polity are crosscut by urbanization, migration, political centralization, social mobility, and modernization is fascinatingly complex, and the people of the northeast provide us with the most interesting paradoxes.

We have firstly noted that in the procivilian assembly-oriented politics the northeast has contributed important representatives, some of whom have provided Pridi support and have promoted a regionalism, an antimilitarism, and an international policy different from that favored by the rulers. We should add that the elite as well as the newly educated families of the northeast have increasingly contributed personnel to the ranks of the civil service, to officialdom, and to the professions – both at central and provincial levels.

Secondly, rapidly expanding Bangkok has urgently required an urban labor force, which need, following the restriction of mass Chinese migration imposed since 1949, has been met through internal migration from rural areas. A large portion of this labor force has been composed of northeastern peasants who pushed by the insufficiency of their own agricultural economy have come to the capital in droves to supplement their agriculture with wage earnings. It would appear that most of this migration is temporary and that the young Isan males join the ranks of unskilled labor at the bottom of the society. Yet while in Bangkok they have a sense of regional identity, they suffer by relative comparison with the central Thai and the

Chinese and to some extent form enclaves and publics for their political representatives in Bangkok.[23]

Thirdly, we have amply documented that the largest contingent of monks in the capital city comes from the villages of the northeast. The most able and ambitious and active of these northeastern monks dominate the ecclesiastical hierarchy, have been the recipients of the prestigious titles awarded the sangha, and upon disrobing have also converted their monastic education to advantageous secular positions. In comparison with their transient migrant lay brethren, most of these professional monks (and novices) have come to stay in Bangkok; a few monks return to their natal provinces; and among those who disrobe some stay in the city while others seek work in the provinces. While the northeastern monks, like other monks from the north or south, have in the capital their regional clientele and lay supporters and disciples, the more impressive feature is, as we saw, their interlocking at all levels in a supportive relationship with the rulers, the civilians, and the urban bourgeoisie (as well as, though less vitally, the laboring segments) irrespective of their regional origins.

Returning to the consideration of the current Thai sangha as a whole, I should make a final qualification. To say that it by and large legitimates the status quo and services the middle classes as effectively as it does the rural masses (and urban workers) is not quite the same thing as saying that it unreservedly legitimates the polity and its military rulers.

At this time (1971), because the military rulers have as their constituency and consenting public the military and civil bureaucracy and the majority of the urban bourgeoisie, the stance of the sangha as being in accord with the status quo is not problematic. But there are two equations that precisely because they present themselves as a complementarity on one side of the coin and as a contradiction on the other side make the political perspective of the sangha not a settled question but a more open one.

The first is the classical as well as the modern problem of the relation between the sangha and the polity. The ideal of a complementary relation between the sangha and the polity is always assailed by a real contradiction. On the one hand, whenever the polity is weak and chaos threatens the society, the sangha too in its aspect as a collection of monastic communities tends to disintegrate – not only for lack of adequate patronage and security but also because, it would appear, a certain amount of political overseeing and regulation guarantees that the monks live according to the *vinaya* code. One the other hand, a political system that becomes overly strong and ambitious is in danger of excessive penetration and excessive regulation of the sangha, which results in the erection of an elaborate administrative hierarchy, creation of a seductive system of titles, and a search for legitimacy by involving monks in more and more political rituals of

[23] See Robert B. Textor (1961) for an informative account of these migrants in Bangkok. Also see Keyes (1967).

state. If this trend gets out of hand, there is the danger of an impoverishment of the monk's vocation and spiritual concerns. When such a situation threatens to emerge, then concerned laymen are likely to feel that "the Buddhist priests were cheated out of their spiritual autonomy by being induced to accept the glory of court titles" (Phra Sarasas 1954, p. 189).

In contemporary Thailand this tension may be related to another paradox that takes the shape of a complementarity but that conceals a latent contradiction. We have at several places said that the present military rulers are linked to the military and civil bureaucracies and the middle classes, from whom they derive their support and on whom they depend for the conduct of day-to-day administration. But the regime has so far put the lid on the expression of regional and provincial interests and views vis-à-vis the center by periodically dissolving the elected assembly. The majority of civil servants have hitherto actively or passively supported the rulers in this policy against the elected assembly allegedly because the former guarantee law and order and stability and because they allow the departments of government to carry on their work undisturbed. But if the military rulers lost the confidence of their administrators and civilian constituency, if they increased their power and excessively interfered with or excessively neglected the day-to-day processes of administration, then an ominous alienation and cleavage might occur within the polity. We should not forget that certain symbols of the 1932 revolution such as elected assembly, constitution, and other accompaniments of democracy are still ideologically important although they were again in 1971 swept under the carpet – except of course relics such as the architectural monuments to democracy that cannot be so easily concealed. Thailand, caught in the web of international politics and having entered the race for modernization, does not possess a convincing rhetoric or an argument to justify to the Western world a form of authoritarian government practiced by its bureaucratic polity, which in many ways is in line with its own historic traditions and which its people understand and largely accept, although it suffers from the running sore of inability to claim the righteousness of dharma for its actions. So even the generals who face the problem of finding legitimacy in international terms must promise constitutions and assemblies and concede that the long-run ideal for Thailand is democracy. In the meantime the creation of new generations of educated youth through the vast expansion of education, many of who have been trained in the United States, Australia, and Europe, inevitably swells the ranks of a political public that would demand a more direct participation in the political process and more freedom to express its views and to organize to promote those views than now obtains.

We unmistakably witness another feature of the radial polity with its primate city of bursting proportions dominating the country. The concentration of higher schools, colleges, institutes, and universities in the capital caters not only to children of the swollen officialdom but also attracts

thousands of youth of rural, small-town, and provincial origins who lodge with kinsmen or at the many wat or find some other accommodation in the warrens of Bangkok. The net result is the massing in in Bangkok of a collectivity of virile, volatile youth fired by ideological tenets and capable of decisive though sporadic political acts, a collectivity that can for the first time in many decades confront in numbers the hitherto monopolistic wielders of force, the army and police.

The master symbols of Buddhism and kingship with the totalizing and multivalent meanings they subsume could just as well act as canopies for the new political ideals and provide the framework for creatively interpreted political action as they were reference points for other political acts in the sixties. If a polarization takes place between a coterie of military rulers backed by force but unable to administer morally and rationally or to ensure economic expansion and political development, and a growing civilian intelligentsia fortified by education and knowledge and the ideals of bourgeois democracy but faced with deteriorating living conditions and restrictive occupational and political horizons, then it is not unlikely that the *bhikkhus* of Thailand may become more directly embroiled in politics as their counterparts have done in Burma and Sri Lanka (and Vietnam). And if the rural masses and urban workers, and the disaffected regional interests of Thailand, were to become mobilized in the settling of this issue – and they do have pressing needs that must be met – the political role of the *bhikkhus* – themselves sons of the village and possessors of complex and, in some ways, effective monastic networks extending from the little rural settlements to the magnetlike metropolis, and the foci of personal followings of laymen *luksit* and clients – may not be inconsequential. And in the last resort it is also relevant to take into account that the rank and file of the armed forces have their origins in this same broad base of rural farmers and urban workers.

20. Dialectical Tensions, Continuities, Transformations, and the Uses of the Past

The stream of events we have documented has occurred in time and space as process; yet we have charted our course with the compass of an overarching ideological conception relating religion and polity in Buddhist Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand. Our approach has consistently averted two theoretical and analytical perspectives that insofar as they are applied to these Southeast Asian Buddhist polities are inaccurate.

We reject that kind of developmental thesis that, beginning with the purely "religious" doctrines of a charismatic leader as the founder of a sect of salvation seekers, sees a subsequent evolution into a "world religion" via the historical intervention of the Asokan reign, during which Buddhism is alleged to have made a *political association* with kingship, enabling the latter to achieve political centralization while itself making an *accommodation* to the world. In the same vein certain present-day religious manifestations are, unaided by historical demonstrations, considered "deviations" purely by recourse to their measurement against the pristine canonical ideas. We have in contrast attempted to strengthen the view that early Buddhism was not merely a salvation quest for the virtuosi but also had a developed view of the world process, of kingship as the ordinating principle of the polity cum society, and that the integral yoking of religion and polity, of sangha and kingship, was the armature with which we must begin our investigation. Asoka's illustrious reign then is seen as a realization of this world image and a charter for all succeeding Theravada kingdoms, which developed their own variants of this heritage.

Secondly, we have also corrected a particular tendentious reading of the canon that not only imputes to it an unambiguous clarity but also deduces too narrowly from it certain enduring behavioral consequences (particularly in the fields of politics and "economic development"). On the contrary, our thesis has been that canonical and postcanonical doctrines, the commentaries and the verbalizations of the believers, the structures embedded in their myths and rites, the pattern of their actions – which together reveal the coupling of Buddhism and the polity – are ridden with dialectical tensions, paradoxes, and ambiguities, which occur as parameters. By dialectical tension (I associate paradox and ambiguity with this concept to which I do not want to give a spurious precision) I mean that a

conception subsumes two tendencies that pull in two directions, and the degree of tension is marked by the force of the stretching; by parameter I mean that a constant component of the mix can vary in different cases and that the variations – which are impelled by circumstances and are responses to situations – constitute the set or family of occurrences. Thus the ideological armature can show pulsation between modalities.

Now, in this particular study, we do not use dialectic as an evolutionary or a developmental unfolding either in the Hegelian sense of the progressive manifestation of the universal spirit through the dialectical thesis-antithesis-synthesis sequences, or in the Marxist sense through the contradictions between forces and relations of production or the conflict of classes. Nor do we want to suggest that the pulsation between modalities implies a periodicity or oscillation in some mechanical or transcendental (archetypal) sense. But we do want to convey that our study has revealed that the central construction of the Buddhist polity does subsume deeply embedded dialectical tensions that particular Southeast Asian religio-political systems (as indeed individual actors) portray in varying mixes and strengths. We have tried to show, especially in reference to Thailand, that these parameters are realized in actual historical situations and circumstances.

Our submission is that the dialectical tensions and paradoxes contained within the ambit of Buddhist doctrines (canonical and postcanonical) and practices (including myths and rites) provide reference points, charters, justifications, and interpretations for different historical eventualities, whose exigencies and contingencies by "elective affinity" (to use a Weberian concept) not only seek the compatible interpretations and meanings, but also whose very contours and shape are seen as realizations by the members of the society of the potentialities of the armature.

In preference to giving philosophical or ontological priority either to the notion of an "archetype" that suppresses "history" and time by its eternal return or recurrent enactment, or to "historical events" that individually and in concatenation are endowed with a linear significance, we have employed the concept of *totalization* to signify both the synchronic and diachronic features of our subject matter. Synchronically, totalization implies as regards the Thai Buddhist polity the coexisting levels of meaning – cosmological, territorial, politico-economic, and so on – that together constitute a total social phenomenon in the Maussian sense; it also implies that first and foremost the contours of the phenomenon should be understood in their own terms rather than being artifically decomposed by externally imposed variables. Diachronically totalization signifies the "becoming" of a society (without implying evolution or change from traditional to modern) as a totality through time by means of continuities, transformations, and the play of dialectical potentialities, arriving at its present arrangement in an open-ended way. Totalization as here

defined is in line with certain Thai formulations and perspectives on the nature of their heritage and the trajectory of their culture and society.

Deep-Seated Dialectical Tensions as Continuities

Let me give some concreteness to these abstract statements by recalling the main dialectical tensions that have emerged in our analysis and that persist as continuities between the past and the present in Thailand (and other Theravada Buddhist societies). These tensions were seen to exist both within and between the terms and domains of our subject matter: within the canonical and later doctrines, within the calling of the monk himself, within the conception of kingship, in the relation between the twin axes – the sangha and kingship, and, finally, within the historical trajectory of the Theravada polities, which have related themselves to one another in the past during times of their decline and rejuvenation.

Briefly addressing ourselves to the last first, let us take for instance Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand, which together make up a meaningful belt by virtue of their sharing a common religion – Theravada Buddhism. Through the ages there was communication and interchange between these countries in religious matters. But on first sight today each country appears to differ significantly from the other. Sri Lanka appears to combine radical Socialist politics with an official support for Buddhism; Burma on the other hand, combines a general's autocratic and bureaucratic rule with a nominal "secularism" that underplays Buddhism and is distrustful of its political use. Thailand stands on the extreme right; its revered (but relatively powerless) kingship was propped up until recently by a powerful military clique that champions Buddhism as the state religion and as a sacred national heritage. These three countries, then, appear to mix politics and religion in different proportions to produce different compounds. Nevertheless, a few decades ago Sri Lanka was ruled by a relatively conservative party (UNP), which tried to keep Buddhism and politics apart or at least within bounds; in contrast, Burma a dozen years ago was enthusiastically behind U Nu, who tried to combine a fervent Buddhism with democratic and Socialist politics; and Thailand, after the so-called revolution of 1932, responded at least for a brief spell to Pridi's Socialist, secularist, democratic politics, and its present ferment since October 1973 is partially at least a return of the aspirations of those times. In other words, the structure of the political system and its relation to Buddhism is not necessarily permanent at any time in these three countries. The patterns comprise temporary crystallizations; each society, it would seem, could change its pattern over time, but the patterns themselves constitute a limited set of possibilities. And these possibilities appear to relate to a deeper underlying and persisting set of dialectical tensions stemming from the relationship between Buddhism and the polity in early Buddhism and

from the Asokan era in India and, subsequently, from the various Buddhist kingdoms of South and Southeast Asia of Sinhalese, Mon, Burmese, and Thai extractions.

One of the most important features of these Theravada Buddhist polities is their active *consciousness of historical continuity*, a consciousness that was accentuated and burgeoned at the end of the colonial era and at the dawn of independence. This consciousness may have suffered eclipses and amnesia during various periods of decline, but at times of resurgence and expansion old literary texts and mythologies always provided the models for revival and lent an air of authenticity to the claim of continuity. Thus one of the distinguishing features of Southeast Asian Buddhist polities was an understanding of history that conceived each country's national destiny to be the protection and guardianship of the religion. Yet, as I have said, this allegedly continuous tradition always contained paradoxes and dialectical tensions that may be expressed as parameters.

In discussing these parameters one should, perhaps, for the sake of clarity make a distinction between canonical Buddhism, which takes as its point of reference the Pali canon known as *Tripitaka* (*Three Baskets*), and historical Buddhism, which refers to later developments and accretions notably from the time of Emperor Asoka onward. The tensions I have discussed derive from canonical as well as historical Buddhism; in some instances the seeds of later issues may be found in the canon itself.

The first tension derives from the antithetical role of the monk: On the one hand, as world renouncer and pursuer of transcendental ends, the monk receives gifts and sustenance from laymen with no obligation to make a return; on the other hand, the monk has an obligation to be a "field of merit" and to reciprocate and give spiritual and humanitarian service to the laymen (and in certain circumstances, to become engaged in this-worldly activity while remaining detached and renouncing the fruits of action). This dichotomy is also reflected elsewhere: the monk's vocation of learning and the vocation of meditation, monks dwelling in towns and those living in the forest, and monks implicated in monastic organization and those who remain apart as hermits or ascetics.

Closely linked with the interpretation of the monk's proper vocation is, as we have seen, the interpretation of technical philosophical concepts. Is nirvana a state of bliss or annihilation, to be attained before death or afterward? Does the highest mental state of *upekkha*, equanimity, encompass loving kindness and positive action, or does it mean ascent to a realm of complete indifference to the world? How are we to avoid misfortune if it is possibly the fruit of our own misdeeds (*vipaka*) as well as of the wicked deeds of other agents from which they should be dissuaded?

An associated problem relates to the fact that a monk who has truly renounced lay life and has gone from home into homelessness should ideally never return to the world; but, alternatively, canonical Buddhism has always sanctioned a monk's giving up his robes without any stigma

attached if he found it difficult to conform to the monk's regimen. In Sri Lanka there is, however, a social stigma attached to a monk who returns to the world; perhaps this may be accounted for by the Indian-Hindu view that the process of a *sannyasin* renouncing caste society, becoming casteless and immune to caste rules, and therefore being unable to return to it subsequently has implications for Sinhalese society, which also has castes. But Burma and Thailand and Laos have gone in the opposite direction. For most of the youth in these countries, being ordained as novice or monk at the threshold of adulthood is a "rite of passage," a desirable spiritual and social accomplishment. Temporary monkhood is common, and even more importantly, monks who have spent some time in robes acquiring education, reputation, and skills, both spiritual and social, use them to advantage when they reenter lay society. (Increasingly, a similar trend is discernible in Sri Lanka with the founding of universities, where monks are able to receive higher education on equal terms with laymen.)

Another paradox is that while the general norm is that a monk should keep away from politics and should not use his spiritual powers for political purposes – because a political monk does damage to the sangha – yet the political monk has emerged from time to time in Buddhist countries. For example, he antedates the colonial period in Burma, and he was not unknown in Sri Lanka. In recent times, among the trio it is again Sri Lanka and Burma that have generated and stimulated the political monk, while Thailand has tended to control or squash him. Perhaps the explanation lies in the impact of colonial rule on the former and its absence in Thailand. We shall return to this later, but here let us note that in Burma during British rule monks and ex-monks emerged as leaders of rebellions (for example, the Saya San revolt) against an alien ruler who had "disestablished" Buddhism. Moreover, in the postindependence era, given democratic politics and the weak political control exercised over monks by a popularly elected government, the activist political monk has flourished in Burma and Sri Lanka, particularly in urban areas (although these activists are numerically only a minority of the total monk population). In Thailand, however, where Buddhism is the state religion, where traditional autocracy remains secure in the form of a military government, where kingship itself is preserved as a revered institution, the explicitly political activist monk is not allowed to emerge and, if he does, is likely to be neutralized or treated harshly when he is felt to be a threat to the secular power. However, educated and activistic elite monks in contemporary Thailand are, as we have seen, seeking a positive role for themselves within the present political and ecclesiastical dispensation and are redefining the role of monks in society in new directions.

Curiously, the question of "orthodoxy" in the behavior of monks relates in Buddhist countries not so much to the propagation of heretical doctrines as to the breaking of rules of conduct and etiquette as laid down in the *vinaya* code. In the history of Buddhism there have been, of course, major

sectarian splits on doctrinal matters, but, more characteristically, schisms within the sangha have arisen on questions of "discipline" relating to details of ritual, etiquette, and conduct, such as methods of ordination, of wearing the robe, or the laxness of behavior regarding the handling of money or sexual morality. The ancient kings supposedly wielded the right to "purify" the sangha, and in Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand this cleaning of the stables had more to do with the "wordliness" or "laxness" of monks (which expressions euphemistically include their problematic participation in politics) than with their heretical beliefs. A possible explanation may be phrased in these terms: Buddhism draws a firm distinction between the path of the monk and that of the layman; the monk's pursuit of salvation is ideally so "individualized" and removed from worldly pursuits that it is difficult to set limits in matters of philosophical doctrine relating to the salvation quest, while what needs to be guarded and can be guarded against is the possible degeneration of the monk's conduct toward the householder's worldly way of life.

We are now in a position to recapitulate the dialectical tensions built into the relation between Buddhism as religion and the polity as the political domain.

The Asokan mythology is well entrenched in the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia, particularly the formula that the king is the patron and protector of the religion, that he must of necessity be a Buddhist himself, and that such a king is an embodiment of dharma. In Sri Lanka, these elements were further elaborated into the ideology that the identity of Sinhalese society was a Buddhist identity, its national consciousness indissolubly linked with Buddhism, and that it was a special historic task entrusted to the Sinhalese to defend the religion against its enemies. As is well known, the Mahavamsa, composed by monks, is the great religious cum political dynastic chronicle of the Sinhalese. But the same idea of a special "national" destiny linked with religion and protected by righteous kings, themselves Buddhas-to-be, was included in the traditions of the Mon, Burmese, Thai, and Laotian kingdoms as well.

In Sri Lanka, this doctrine of identifying state and society with Buddhism created difficulties in the postcolonial era, when the larger society included non-Buddhist and non-Sinhalese-speaking minorities. The ideology leads to an intolerant dogma that excludes other religions and languages from equal membership within the polity. While in Sri Lanka the Sinhalese have practiced this dogma against a group equal to themselves in culture and civilization, in Burma the same intolerant, exclusionary attitudes were focused on the hill tribes considered to be "inferior" to the Burmese. And Thailand in recent years has demonstrated the same intolerance toward its hill tribes, particularly the Meo, who have suffered from military action against them. Moreover, both Burma and Thailand are not averse to training the same guns on Moslem minorities, whether their ethnic origins are the same as or different from the Buddhist majority.

This constant strain to identify the religion with the state and the Buddhist state, in turn, with a Buddhist society creates perpetual internal cleavages of a sort that are absent in Hindu India (except when that society collides headlong with a militant, excluding religion like Islam). Traditionally, Hinduism did not formulate its identity through king or state but through the caste system that comprises society. Hinduism has always tended to encompass its minorities and to incorporate and hierarchize them; I am not suggesting, however, that "dominant" groups in India do not economically exploit tribal groups or take political and military action against them when they are considered intractable; I am suggesting only that the grounds for doing so are not justified in religious terms. But Buddhism, which especially in its militant phases has associated itself with a political definition of its competence, tends to exclude and eliminate its "aliens" and its minorities rather than try to incorporate them. While India has successfully withstood all attempts in modern times to conjoin state and religion, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand find it difficult to keep at bay the demands that Buddhism be declared the official and privileged religion of the state.

One remarkable feature of the Buddhist mix may be mentioned en passant. In the postindependence era not only has Buddhism been a strong ingredient of Sinhalese, Burmese, and Thai nationalism, but indeed most politicians, even the ardent reformers and modernizers, have felt the imperative need to ally themselves with the revival of Buddhism and to declare their political aims as being consistent with Buddhism. How are the politicians of Buddhist countries – conservatives and radicals – able to achieve this, while in Islamic countries, where religion makes similar political demands, radical reformers sometimes feel it necessary to attack and disown a "conservative" Islam? One answer is that it is precisely because Islam legislates on matters social, familial, and jural that reformers feel the need to blast it away when it opposes their remedies, whereas it is precisely because Buddhism is imprecise and scarcely legislates on matters of lay social ethics that it can act as an umbrella of political identity at the widest level without fear of creating internal cleavages among the believers.

Despite these historic, persisting identifications of religion with political authority and state, there exists also a basic distinction that ideally the sangha (the monastic order) and the political authority are separate domains. In theory, the sangha experiences immunity in its internal matters and even in relation to its property and endowments. Nevertheless, these boundaries are never preserved in practice. We have noted already that the king was granted the right to "purify" the religion by taking forceful action against monasteries and monks not living according to the *vinaya* rules and thereby bringing the religion into disrepute. The counterpart of this incursion by the ruler into religion is that kings have always needed the sangha and its eminent monks to legitimate their authority. Thus there is no doubt that in ancient Ceylon during the Anuradhapura

period kings played the political game of supporting one or the other of the three *nikayas* – the Mahavihara, the Abhayagiri, and the Jetavana – in order to strengthen their power. Schisms within the sangha were not unrelated to the vagaries of dynastic politics, especially when rebellions were endemic, successions rapid, and usurpers frequent. It is also clear that the requirements for legitimation of the current king were closely allied with purifications of the sangha and with initiating new ordinations (*upasampada*) of monks. A king of Tamil origin, Kirti Sri Rajasimha, sought legitimation through similar means in the eighteenth century. Rama I of Thailand acted in a similar manner at the beginning of a new dynasty. And even in the past few decades, various prime ministers of Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand have wooed the sangha for support and legitimation of their positions. Thus, despite the formal separation of sangha and ruler, their activities interpenetrate and their fortunes oscillate according to the state of play. In our own times, politicians find that the felt necessity to "revive" and support Buddhism not only activates demands among enthusiasts for making Buddhism the state religion but also spawns politically active monks. Yet the dangers inherent in these trends again force governments to neutralize the monks politically and to declare the sangha's remoteness from the affairs of this world. The oscillation is endemic and repetitive and a conspicuous feature of contemporary politics.

We next come to the dialectical tension faced by a lay politician who is a self-proclaimed Buddhist with regard to the problem of violence and the use of force in political action. This tension was already built into the ancient formula that the king was both a wheel-rolling *cakkavatti* (universal emperor) and a *bodhisattva* (Buddha-to-be). The doctrinal resolution in historical Buddhism was that the king was a righteous ruler, an embodiment of dharma, and the fountainhead of justice. This avoided any contradiction between the activities of ruling and the practice of morality, between indulgence in politics and the religious pursuit.

In actual fact, however, political effectiveness and the practice of morality were never achieved concurrently by great men. Kings must be good killers before they can turn to piety and good works. Asoka's alleged conversion and his pious pillar edicts followed the victorious wars that made possible the largest empire India had known until the arrival of the British. Dutha Gamini, the Sinhalese hero, indulged in successful violence and blood spilling in his defeat of the Tamils before he could build his monuments and accumulate his credit of merit. Formerly, therefore, kings made the passage from violence to piety; today this pattern is still visible among ordinary folk who, after a boisterous and robust youth, may become pious *upasaka* in their old age, withdrawing from the world and practicing the precepts.

Interestingly enough, especially in modern times, the opposite passage is also possible and politically feasible – first to be a monk and then later to become engaged actively with this world. For notable examples we should

turn to Burma and Thailand, where ex-monks have become successful men of the world – high civil servants, politicians, teachers, and even businessmen. More interestingly, U Nu of Burma recharged his moral batteries by periodically retreating for a short time into meditation and temporary monkhood before returning to active phases of politics. In Thailand the king himself temporarily donned the monk's robe, a gesture that gave him the stamp of maturity. And less dramatically, Sinhalese politicians from Bandaranayake to lesser men have felt that their political performance would be aided by public acts of piety and good works, thus demonstrating that for a layman there was a feedback from religious activity to this-worldly success. Thus we see in these examples varying quantities in the mix between morality and politics, *ahimsa* and force – shifts from one state to the other and sometimes an elusive balance between the two.

The final dialectical theme I would like to recall is the traditional coexistence of divine kingship and political insurrection in the traditional polity. On the one hand, it is precisely because the inherent instability of the political edifice, as signified by the contentious recruitment of kings and their pulsating fortunes, was closely related to the galactic arrangement of satellites around a center that we find the search for its stabilization in the elaborate ritualization of kingship and its legitimation by the Buddhist sangha and court functionaries. On the other hand, there are not only the doctrinal traditions of *bodhisattva* and *dharmaraja*, but also the coexistence in legal codes of a theory of social contract with a chosen self-evident kingship as embodiment of virtue; these ideas can not only accommodate varying political circumstances but also always hold up to the actual rulers the ideal they must follow and the lesson that their rise and fall is a measure of their deviation from the norm. I have suggested that these precedents also illuminate the speedy rise and fall of present-day governments, the summary decline of the careers of politicians as well as their earnest canonization.

What our analysis of Thai polity and its vicissitudes has persistently brought to view is the character of Buddhist polity as conception and as manifest occurrence: that there is a progressive decadence of man until kingship as the representation of dharma occurs as the ordinating factor; that ideally the Buddhist polity is predicated on the special relation of the king to the social and cosmic orders, a relationship that both expresses (model of) order and maintains (model for) order in such a way as to enable religion to persist and flourish, where, otherwise, social life would lead to a peculiarly Buddhist idea of degeneration, commotion and moral chaos; and, finally, that particular kings and politicians may fulfill the norm differently according to their karma and merit, which accounts for the vicissitudes of their rise and fall and also affects the fortunes of the sangha.

In passing we may note how our viewpoint delivers an answer different from that of Marx's to the question that he raised in relation to Asia in general and we in relation to Thailand (and Southeast Asia) in particular.

Marx at one stage in his writings asked the grand question regarding the basis of Asiatic society, Oriental despotism, Asiatic mode of production – labels he used interchangeably – which intrigued him by its static unchanging nature. His answer emphasized two modalities. On the one hand he saw the birth of the Asian state in the need for government-directed waterworks, and in the New York *Tribune* articles of 1853 (1951) he exaggerated its hydraulic role, its rapacity (its "plunder" of the interior and of the exterior), and its crushing supremacy over the dispersed peasantry over whom it stood as "the real landlord." In *Capital* he saw in the simplicity of the self-sufficing village communities "the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic States and the never-ceasing changes of dynasty" (vol. I). Apropos this statement, he was right about the empirical instability of the states, but he was wrong in swallowing (like Maine) the romanticized view of the Indian village community as self-sufficing republics propagated by certain British administrations in India and, thereby, underestimated the role of the wider political framework.

Our delineation of the pulsating Southeast Aisan galactic polity, of which the Thai Buddhist polity is a version, allows us to say in paradoxical yet accurate terms that the elaborate religio-politico conception – of a king of kings and his duplicating satellites – was the primary mold for society. Yet the religio-political conception implied a pulsation and fluid rearrangement of the constituents, and the actual historical polities were indeed subject to constant dissolution and refounding. But this dynamic of change at the top did not vitiate the globular structure of the society made up of leader-follower (*nai-phrai*) circles of widening range (from village to local chieftain to the grand kingdom), which were capable of rearranging themselves in a galactic pattern. As we have earlier argued, the vicissitudes of particular polities occurred within the span of their logistical, territorial, economic, and administrative frames, which were *integral* components of the total design of the traditional polity. This design was replicated time and again over vast stretches of time.

The Western Impact and Linear Change

Felix Gilbert commented that a profound change in historical outlook has taken place because of the decline of European power and the consequent rise to importance of non-European peoples.

> The historical process is no longer seen as a continuum. The notion of the continuity of the historical process was Europe-centered; it was the story of a development that began in the ancient world and the Mediterranean area, spread over the whole of Europe creating various nations with a common legacy, and issued in the domination of the world by the European nations.[1]

[1] Felix Gilbert, "Post Scriptum," *Daedalus*, 100, No. 2 (Spring 1971).

The student of South and Southeast Asian societies has not merely a simple-minded Euro-centric view of world history to correct. In many ways the European colonial impact on Asia was as much discontinuous in its effect on native societies as was the previous influence of longer-lived, pulsating Indian and Chinese empires on the smaller in-between societies situated from Burma to Indonesia. All these impacts changed the face of the host societies. Moreover, India and China themselves were, in their turn, subject to waves of conquest and new influences.

It is precisely because of this archaeological layering that it is possible to make several statements that add up to a complex whole. It is clear, as already stated, that there are deep-seated continuities in the form of structures and dialectical orientations that have persisted through the period of Western impact into the present in all Asian societies. It is also clear that the Western impact, while introducing dynamic change, cannot be regarded as *uniquely* discontinuous in its effect on the colonies and satellite countries. For one thing, these same countries had experienced other major impacts before the arrival of Europeans, and, for another, it is possible to demonstrate that whatever differential changes they experienced in modern times Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand can still be placed in a wider frame that encompasses certain of their important particularities and distinctive features.

Thailand is a conspicuous example of the persistence of traditional features – of historical continuities that modify modernization – and also of transformations based on tradition. Although there is much that is similar among Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand, I must also concede that the European colonization of Sri Lanka and Burma has radically affected and perhaps introduced irreversible changes regarding the twin axes of traditional kingship and monastic organization, and the consequent direction of politics, both among monks and laymen. Thailand, by comparison, despite its experience of modernization shows a greater continuity of structure with the traditional Buddhist polity that was historically common to all three countries.

Thus, against the large backdrop of historical continuities, it is unquestionably true to say that recent, changing, political, and economic circumstances account for the different political and religious ideologies prevailing in Burma and Sri Lanka, on the one hand, and Thailand, on the other. But note again that the primary issues that engage the people of these countries relate to definitions of and relations between religion, nationhood, state, and minorities – which can be traced back to persisting deep-rooted orientations.

While Thailand may seem in certain respects more intact than Burma or Sri Lanka by virtue of its uninterrupted enjoyment of political autonomy, yet this book has also strongly argued that the Western impact has made irreversible linear changes in the constitution of that society; indeed in many respects its intactness has made it more open to certain features of westernization than Burma or Sri Lanka.

Since the establishment of the Chakkri dynasty in 1782, but more importantly since the Bowring Treaty in 1855, the paradoxical effect of contact with Western powers was the expansion of the country's economic horizons – no doubt on "colonial" lines especially through overseas trading in agricultural and mineral products – which enabled King Chulalongkorn in particular to make the final passage from the galactic polity with its divisional autonomies to a more centralized system of domination by means of a patrimonial bureaucracy, to gather economic and power resources to a hitherto unprecedented degree, and thereby, in the very process of fending off the Western imperial powers, to inaugurate an age of political stabilization, incremental centralization, and gradual modernization. In this venture the expertise of European and American secular advisers and missionaries, the knowledge, organizational skills, and experience they provided, and the administrative and educational achievements in adjacent British and French and Dutch colonies played a constructive part. Siam was exploited, but it also exploited in turn. And the ensuing product variously described as "bureaucratic" polity, "radial" polity, and so on, is a crystallization, an amalgam and a totalization of a distinctive character among the so-called developing states of Southeast Asia.

The increased centralization and stabilization of the polity had the additional incremental and irreversible result that, by the very act of enlarging the ecclesiastical hierarchy and creating a nationally organized sangha, it increased its regulation of the sangha to a degree also previously unknown. The Sangha Acts of 1902, 1941, and 1963, all defensible in the idiom of the traditional rights of kingship to "purify" the sangha, signify a political penetration into sangha affairs. But the sangha's voluntary cooperation in the polity's tasks of spreading education and in integrating the country is the reciprocal gesture that underlines a distinctive fact about Thailand – that conservation and strengthening of "religion" is a plank in the country's preservation of identity while seeking change. In this respect Thailand possesses by virtue of a continuity in the place of Buddhism in the polity a more self-assured and therefore less self-conscious outlook than previously colonized countries like Sri Lanka and Burma. If in these countries the British imperial rulers bowing to Christian missionary pressures, on the one hand, and inspired by nineteenth-century utilitarian cum liberal notions of the necessary divorce between politics and religion, on the other, "disestablished the Buddhist church" (to use their phrasing), many of the local postindependence rulers, even though trained in the Western school of constitutional democracy, have in turn felt it difficult to resist revivalist and nativistic pressures that Buddhism be "restored" to its previous "glorious" state even to the point of making it a state religion, especially because such seemingly religious (and divisive) demands were inextricably linked to the political consciousness and imagined political fulfillment of the majority Buddhist community. But the allied

problem faced by Sri Lanka and Burma is that restoration of religion by state also implies the attempted regulation of the sangha by the state, a proposition that is antithetical to those monastic interests that have come to cherish the decentralized autonomy resulting from that same British disestablishment of religion.

The transformation yet felt continuity in the pivotal institution of kingship in Thailand is a critical topic for study. Our previous chapters have shown how Thai kingship, especially since the Ayutthaya era onward, has been compounded of a number of ingredients, the two foremost being the *dharmaraja* and *devaraja* conceptions associated with Sinhala-Pagan-Sukhodaya ideas on the one side and Khmer on the other. There were many strings to the royal bow. And particular kings could emphasize different aspects and images of kingship or exploit all of them as circumstances warranted, and even successfully draw on European notions and ritual forms. But the immediate sequel to the 1932 revolution was the clipping of the power and rituals of kingship, an attitude that has been progressively superseded by a return in the sixties to traditional emphases, under Sarit. The end result today is that the king does in a real way symbolize the dharma of politics, and with Buddhism the collective identity of the Thai people, while at the same time, and perhaps precisely because of, being removed from the actual arena and practitioners of politics. To reign but not to rule, to enjoy the charisma of legitimating the actual rulers and therefore also of mediating when the times are out of joint – all this connotes a return to some deep-seated aspects of the heritage, in spite of recognized changes.

Our characterization of the structure of the traditional Thai galactic polity and its transition or transformation to a radial polity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has freed us from being impaled on the horns of certain dichotomies, such as ideology versus interest, cultural value versus social action, structure versus change.

We have demonstrated the sense in which the galactic polity is a totalization: The cosmological level of formulation (whether as the *cakkavatti* presiding as king of kings over lesser kings or as the pantheon of 33) is homologous with the territorial arrangement of the polity (of the royal domain with the capital and palace at the center, its duplicating provinces and surrounding "vassal" states) and is again paralleled by the involuted bipartitions of administrative organization and the mandala pattern of circles of leaders and followers at the level of political relations. The totality cannot be disaggregated; nor can the said dichotomies be imposed on it; nor can it be said to be the outcome of a single mode of thought, cosmological, ecological, or other. Political pulsations and process are an integral part of the galactic system and its modalities.

We have suggested that the impact of the Western powers and Thailand's modernizing adventure have scarcely catapulted it into a radical change of state but that the Chakkri kings cumulatively attained on an en-

during and irreversible basis one modality of the previously pulsating system – its strongest state – which we have called the radial polity. In other words, a transformation was achieved that was a possibility of the system itself.

This radial polity in turn has, despite the revolution of 1932 and the subsequent disjunction between kingship and the ruling military and bureaucratic elites, accentuated certain of its centripetal characteristics as a function both of its Bangkok-dominated and directed policies and of the conniving exigencies of the Vietnam War and lavish American aid. This radial polity with its present swollen student and immigrant population and officialdom in the capital, and confronted by the requirements of regional decentralization, may possibly transform itself again. In the meantime, we have revealed a feature of the post-1932 polity that is hidden by its authoritarian mask: that from the perspective of the relation between Buddhism and the polity, the latter has been supported by an "exchange between social classes," between the monks recruited from a poor peasant base and the ablest and most aspiring of them deployed on a monastic network orientated toward Bangkok and the ruling cliques recruited from segments of the rural landed or middle officialdom that were removed from power in the pre-1932 times. But note again that the educational route traveled by monks and their achievement of ecclesiastical office or conversion to a higher level in lay society have precedents leading back to Ayutthayan times; and that the reigns of the early Chakkri kings were characterized by a similar new recruitment of talent to the ranks of nobility.

If we find it difficult or even impossible in many situations today to separate continuities from transformations, it is for the good reason that in Thailand (as in many other posttraditional and developing societies) there is a simultaneous reference to "two uses of the past."[2]

The first use of the past is *past as sanction.* This view of the past has two dimensions. It embraces the Malinowskian "charter" theory, which focuses on how people use the past as a legitimator of the present; thus the past is seen as a living present. There is also the further use whereby whatever changes, modifications, and innovations are introduced in the present are referred back to a pristine canonical model or event and seen as reflecting it (however dubious the actual fit is between the present event and its alleged precedent). The past used in these ways has been a handmaid of authority serving to conserve as well as to adapt. The traditional Thai view of "history" and their use of it is in this tradition of past as

[2] I am employing here certain expressions used by J. H. Plumb in *The Death of the Past,* Pelican Books, 1973. Plumb refers to a third orientation to the past – the study of the past "for its own sake," which he identifies as the discipline of "critical historiography," "the signal achievement of Western historians over the last two hundred years." It may also be noted that Eliade's earlier *Cosmos and History* (1959), first published in French in 1949, especially in its treatment of archetypes and of the Judaeo-Christian interpretation of events as historical unfolding, anticipates some of Plumb's assertions.

sanction, a use of which we have met many examples, for instance, when *thammathud* is referred back to the alleged missionary activity of the Asokan era, or when the inspiration for the formation of the Thammayut sect was sought by Mongkut in the doctrines and practices of an alleged pure Mon tradition of Buddhism, or when the political authority's regulation of the sangha in the acts of 1902, 1941, and 1963 was grounded in the ancient claim of the king's right to purify the sangha.

But there is also the use of the *past as destiny*, the past seen as influencing the unfolding of the future in a linear pattern. Although there are in Asian intellectual systems intimations and "primitive" versions of this orientation – for example, in the cosmological scheme of the cyclical repetition of ages, in millenarian visions linked to the coming Buddha, Mettaya, and more concretely in astrological and divinatory practices that refer back to the karma of past lives, the influence of planets, and so on – yet perhaps it is correct to say that a systematic view of the linking of past and future, event leading to event, as unfolding destiny expressed in ideas such as progress, evolution, development has its origins in Judaeo-Christian traditions of prophecy[3] and infected the East through colonial contact with the West.

The countries of Asia met diverse versions of this Western notion of purposeful past leading to purposeful future. In devout missionaries of various sects they met the Christian version. But the missionary version was part and parcel of the grander imperial version, of which possibly the British account was the grandest. The vast growth and success of the British Empire, the fabulous wealth that it poured into England, and the grandiose sense of power that control of "natives" and lesser peoples gave it – all these gave England a sense of special destiny created for it by Providence, a destiny read with awe and zeal in the so-called Whig interpretation of history. "This was the belief that English institutions, like no other in the Western world, were the result of slow growth from Saxon days; that like a coral reef, precedent had fallen on precedent, erecting a bulwark of liberty, creating institutions such as Parliament or constitutional monarchy" (Plumb 1973, p. 70).

Such national pasts were claimed by others as well: "God could be British or French or German or Spanish or American, as well as Christian" (p. 71). From all these brands of aggressive nationalism oozed general ideas of progress and Social Darwinism.

These messages and doctrines were not lost on the famous Thai mon-

[3] The concept that within history of mankind itself a process was at work which would mould his future, and lead man to situations totally different from his past, seems to have found its first expression among the Jews.

. . .

[The Jews'] own highly individual use of the past became ideologically revolutionary only when transmogrified by Christianity, it became part of the belief of an established Church, backed by the authority of the state – a revolution of exceptional importance, one of the most profound that Western man has expressed in the field of ideas (Plumb, op. cit., pp. 56, 58).

archs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and their political heirs. They launched various changes because they believed in progress – but a progress in which the imitation of certain Western technical and administrative achievements was to be combined with the preservation of Buddhism and of certain social conceptions and institutions. Thai notions of destiny – whether grounded in the past as sanction or in the future as prophecy – are inextricably linked with the promises and goals of the Buddhist religion. But insofar as Western political notions of democracy and constitutional monarchy, and so on, are accepted as part of the package of progress and modernization, they too in the long run must together with Buddhism find a place in the political process. Thailand today (as in the past) displays its brand of aggressive nationalism, shows evidence of religious reformism, scripturalism, and revitalization; its conservative shell is subject to the irritant of democratic politics; and it wants to hitch its destiny to the engine of progress. In these aspirations and orientations both uses of the past converge, and continuities and transformations are to each other as Siamese twins. Thus what to a somewhat ahistorically minded modernization theorist looks like a conscious reformism and reinterpretation of traditional religious ideas in order to face present-day tasks (whose proportions as well as solutions owe a great deal to recent colonial contact with Western powers), may look like still another version of purification of religion and renovation of the kingdom to the historically minded analyst who sees in the unfolding of the Buddhist polities of Asia several recurrences of an Asokan precedent closely linked to the pulsations of political process. It is not necessary to choose between the two but to combine imaginatively the study of continuities and transformations, prospective and retrospective analyses in the "becoming" of societies that are patently historical and have rich literary traditions.

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